AMAZING HEROES

No. 139
April 15, 1988
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DEAN MULLANEY

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Our Cover: Mmm, fried alien with lemon butter. An original by Mark A. Nelson artist from the Dark Horse series.© 1988 20th Century Fox

Editorial

An Amazing Reader recently asked me to address whether Wally West should have sex in *The Flash*. Not one to look a gift editorial idea in the mouth, I will do so, but in a way that might not satisfy him. I have a theory. It's called characterization.

Is there such a thing in comics? Well, describe a favorite character. Is he a hot-head, a punster? How did he get that way? If you say "that's just the way he is," the writer hasn't done a good job. The same is true if that's all you can say. What's that about if you can describe a person in one phrase it's a stereotype.

I'm not talking about what *happens* to him, i.e. a gunman killed his parents or he was bitten by a radioactive insect and failed to stop his uncle's murderer. How have they *dealt* with that and, most importantly, how have they grown or when other things change in their lives. What do they think of themselves? Have they really looked at themselves?

What makes up a person is more than one incident. Each of us is a composition of our entire lives. How much do we know about the hero's childhood, besides what's shown in the origin issue? Family, friends, schooling, religion, etc. Somerset Maugham said, "You can never know enough about your characters."

Most comic writers do not have the advantage of creating a character and seeing him through his entire "lifetime"—not so much with creator-owned characters, where writers can have the character grow without corporate dictums. But sometimes they must work with established facts, maybe contradicting. And to change them is tantamount to original sin.

Characters change little in comics—or not so it as has any relevance. How many times has a hero been pushed to almost killing a crook, but says, "If I did, I'd be no better than him." It's trying to show a change in the hero's aspect, when the conclusion is usually already a known part of the character.

I'm not saying characters should change every issue or that there aren't writers who do this. I'm saying there should be a *growth*: at how they take pressures and responsibilities, how they face crises and crooks, how they react their social lives and to others. Scott Summers handled Jean Grey's death "reaistically" (until it was taken too far), but what did he *learn*? How did he *change*? Imagine the strength of resolve Superman could have gained by being the only Kryptonian to survive the crisis?

A cliche (something trite and hackneyed, not really wrong): everyone is a jewel, facet upon facet. Without one facet, it's flawed. What facets make up Wally West. Take everything about him into account and then . . . leave it up to Bill Loebs. Does he, as the writer, feel that's what Wally would do? It has already happened, as I read it, but what are the consequences? Ah, consequences.

"Realism" in comics should never hinge on "hot topics" addressed or the continuity. "Realism" is believable characters reacting logically, even if the situation is fantastic. Characters give credibility; they suspend my disbelief; they make me want to read on and come back next month.

KEVIN DOOLEY

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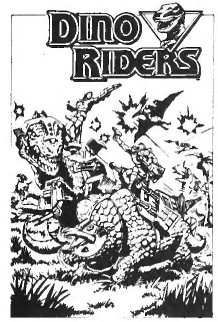
NEWSLINE

MARVEL: *HERCULES* G.N.; LEE/MOEBIUS *SURFER*; NEW EPIC TITLES



Rid'em Triceratops! A toy tie-in set around the La Brea Pits coming in summer.

BOB LAYTON, writer/artist of two previous ***Hercules, Prince of Power*** mini-series—in '82 and '84 both four issue outings—now returns to the son of Zeus in a Graphic Novel.

The title of this 80-page story is "Full Circle" and it concerns Arimathes, the son of Hercules, who has been tainted against his father by mom: **Layana Sweetwater** from the first mini-series.

Two other past mini-series regulars return—**Skyppi the Skrull** and the **Recorder**.

It's 80 pages, full color and will sell for $7.95.

And just in case you missed the first mini-series, Marvel is putting the four issues into one 96-page trade paperback edition, selling for $5.95. It should be out now. LAYTON did a new cover for the collection.

Man and dinosaur? Anything is possible when you're one of the ***Dino Riders*** a toy tie-in book due out this summer. GEORGE CARAGONNE, FRED FREDERICKS and JOE SINNOTT are at the creative reins with an infrequent assist from WALT SIMONSON.

Different artists will render the many TV realities (there's an oxymoron!) ***Video Jack*** introduces. JIM STARLIN, BERNI WRIGHTSON, NEAL ADAMS, STEVE BISSETTE, WALT SIMONSON, and FRED HEMBECK do pages in ***#6***.

You have to wait until September for the ***Havok and Wolverine*** four-issue mini-series. Written by WALT and LOUISE SIMONSON, art by JAY MUTH and KENT WILLIAMS, each issue is in the $3.50 bookshelf format.

Have you heard about the new ***Silver Surfer*** team of STAN LEE and MOEBIUS? The star-spanning story will first apear in a two-issue $1.25 no-ad format series in July and August followed by a hardcover version in December with new material.

Monthly, beginning in August, the complete "Incal" MOEBIUS adventure will be released.

JOHN BOLTON goes to ***Someplace Strange*** via his painted 64-page, $6.95 graphic novel.

Collecting ***The Last Dragon*** wasn't easy, but the chapters appearing in ***Epic Illustrated*** helped. It'll be all in one graphic novel written by DENNY O'NEILL, art by CARL POTTS and TERRY AUSTIN.

All of the ***Groos*** printed under the Pacific Comics banner will be recolored and put into six bookshelf format editions called ***The Groo Chronicles***.

Late this year ROY RICHARDSON and ROD WHIGHAM will regale us with tales of ***Tomorrow Knights*** about the problems of being an idealist in a society of mercenaries.

Two Epic tales of sleeping soldiers:

1) With WWIII on the horizon, an army officer is put in suspended animation and becomes ***The Last American***. This six-issue series begins this summer, written by JOHN WAGNER and ALAN GRANT, illustrated by MIKE McMAHON.

2) You are a veteran whose body is comatose. You'd think the war would be over. However, in the six-issue ***Light and Darkness War*** courtesy of writer TOM VEITCH (***Swamp Thing***) and artist CAM KENNEDY (***Outcasts***) the war you're now in is the most important conflict ever. $1.95 per issue brings this saga to your hands.

There will be a special preview of the ***Light and Darkness War*** in our next issue. ●

Groo Chronicles on your bookshelf: a collection of his Pacific Comics classics soon.

DC: BYRNE BIDS GOODBYE!

"John Byrne has, unfortunately, suddenly resigned from *Superman*," the news release to retailers read.

Chris McCubbin, a reporter for *The Comics Journal*, talked to Byrne to confirm that yes, he had indeed left the books. As to whether or not he has actually left DC, and to the whys and wherefores of it, Byrne would not comment.

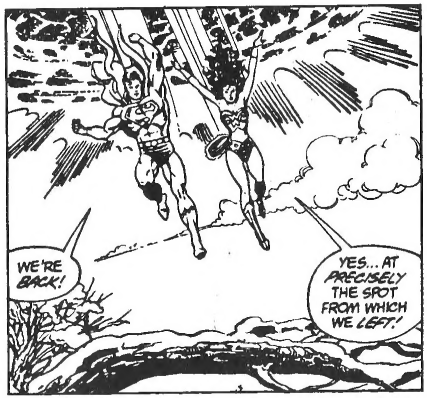
The editor of most of the Superman titles, Mike Carlin, cited "personal reasons" as to why Byrne departed.

Byrne was, according to sources, unhappy with the "50th Anniversary Celebration" TV show and with some negativism about his revision of the Man of Steel in the March 14, 1988 *Time* magazine article.

There had to be some realigning of shipping schedules in order to allow DC enough time to "name the best possible successor" to Byrne. Affected will be *Superman* #'s **20-22**, which will all be delayed; *Adventures of Superman* will still ship at the same time, but the contents will be different. **#443** contains a story by JERRY ORDWAY, with art by JOHN STATEMA and DOUG HAZLEWOOD. The original interior for #'s **443** and **444** will both be moved up one issue. The *Adventures of Superman Annual* **#10** has been "indefinitely postponed."

The Man of Steel has survived worse. ●

The Terminator: harder to kill than aliens.



From John Byrne's "resolution" of the Superman-Wonder Woman romance in *Action* #600. All the shouting may be over with Byrne's departure . . . or maybe not.

NOW: *RACER* ON DISK

Ready to be slimed? ***The Real Ghostbusters*** have answered the call and will appear in their own full color monthly comic starting in June.

JAMES VAN HISE writes, JOHN TOBIAS pencils, BRIAN THOMAS inks, and RICH POWERS colors the new adventures of the men devoted to saving the world at . . . almost any cost. The first issue, selling for $1.75, has a full painted cover by KEN STEACY.

In other hard-to-keep-a-good-man-down news:

The phrase "I'll be back!" still echoes throughout the factory even as the final light fades from the ruby eyes of the **Terminator**. It was a promise, a threat, a good tag line. And it will be fulfilled—not only in the sequel to the movie, now in preproduction, but also in the full-color ***Terminator*** monthly comic book from writer FRED SCHILLER, artist TONY ATKINS, and inker JIM BROZMAN.

The series is set in the future portion of the movie's storyline, in the year 2031, where machines known as **Terminators** have the task of wiping out the weak, namely humanity. And humanity, such fools as they are, are fighting back.

The book will sell for $1.75.

In June. From NOW. He's baaaack! (Whoops, wrong movie.)

The Terminator's writer, FRED SCHILLER guest scripts issue **#13** of ***Speed Racer*** with art by TOM MORGAN and CYGNET ASH. It's a full-color monthly for $1.75.

In the ***Speed Racer Special*** **#2** the art of Speed's creator, TATSUO YOSHIDA, is featured, translated from the original manga, colored by KEN STEACY.

Included is a *Flexi-disk* with the cartoon's theme song! ***Special*** **#2** will be a 48-page bookshelf format and will sell for $3.50. ●

TAPS FOR THE TOP TEN—*THE KILLING JOKE* REIGNS

The top 100 best sellers for March according to Capital City Distribution has DC at the top spot, but Marvel still holding six out of the first ten:

1. ***The Killing Joke***
2. ***X Men*** **#231**
3. ***X-Factor*** **#30**
4. ***New Mutants*** **#65**
5. ***Action Comics Weekly*** **#601**
6. ***Amazing Spider-Man*** **#302**
7. ***Iron Man*** **#232**
8. ***Justice League Int'l*** **#15**
9. ***Spectacular Spider-Man*** **#140**
10. ***Green Arrow*** **#6**

The Batgirl Special that tied in with ***The Killing Joke*** came in at **16**. As for #1s, DC's new ***Manhunter*** debuted at **26** with Marvel's ***Black Panther, Nick Fury vs. S.H.I.E.L.D.,*** and ***Powerline*** (part of the Shadowline) started out at **30, 34,** and **37** respectively. ***Lone Wolf and Cub*** **#11** was the *first* non-DC/Marvel on the list at **58**.

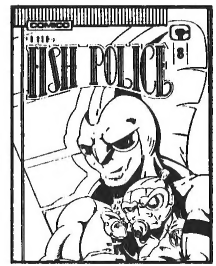
Reminder: this is best *seller* not *most* seller. ***The Killing Joke***, because of its higher price tag, had to sell less to make more than ***X-Men***.

Capital City's catalogue also stated to buy every comic available in March would take a mere $654.00. ●

COMICO: NEW *GRENDEL* TEAM; YES TO FISH SHTICKS AND *THE ROCKETEER!*

The name HANNIBAL KING may not be familiar now, but with his first assignment being the new penciller on ***Grendel***, you know it soon will be. He begins with issue **#20**. He will be "embellished" by TIM SALE, late of the ***Thieves World*** graphic novels from Starblaze Graphics. The whole thing will now be full-color painted by JOE MATT. Yes, MATT WAGNER will still be writing it. The cover of **#20** will be painted by RON TURNER.

The "Fish Shticks" back-ups in ***Fish Police vol. 2*** will feature art by some pretty cool dudes: **#6**-STEVE PURCELL of ***Sam and Max, Freelance Police***; **#7**-GARY THOMAS WASHINGTON of ***Speed Racer***; ***#8-Eddy Current*** and ***Transit***'s TED McKEEVER; **#9**-VALENTINO of ***Valentino***; **#10**-SCOTT SAAVEDRA of the late and lamented ***It's Science with Dr. Radium***; **#11**-NORMAN DOG who's done stories in ***Spin, Suburban High Life, Prime Cuts,*** and the new ***Itchy Planet*** from Fantagraphics; ***#12-The Jam*** and ***Grendel*** artist BERNIE MIREAULT.



Back up for Moncuse's *Fish Police* #8 will be by Ted McKeever. Others to follow.

All the stories will be written by ***FP***'s creator STEVE MONCUSE, who does (or did) the lead features, which are reprints of the venerated Fishwrap stories, but in *color*. There will be new **Fish Police** stories starting in the fall. Issues **#6-11** will be published bi-weekly and then it'll go bi-monthly. Each issue sells for $1.75.

Everyone's favorite heroic pup that appears in ***Jonny Quest*** will have a solo story in **#25** of that title thanks to the regular team of MESSNER-LOEBS, HEMPEL, WHEATLEY, and MAYER.

Larry, Harry and **Jerry** are coming to Comico. For those in-the-know they are the stars of ***Trollords***, which was published by Tru Studios. Co-creators PAUL FRICKE and SCOTT BEADERSTADT are at their regular posts. Though the book will be "lighter," as the press release stated, expect more social commentary in the new series, as the guys have discovered a purpose to their lives, but there is also a guarantee of "a few yuks in every issue." The new ***Trollords*** will begin renumbering at **1**, be on a bi-monthly schedule, and sell for $1.75.

Here are some upcoming Comico events:

Bloodscent - by GENE COLAN and DEAN ALLEN SCHRECK. It should be out around mid-October.

Elementals Trade Paperback - reprinting of the first five issues of . . . yes, as well as the first story from ***Justice Machine Annual*** way back in '84. Creativity by writer/artist BILL WILLINGHAM, and MARK WOLF, JACK HERMAN, RICH RANKIN, and others. This should appear in November.

Well, that's it.

Oh yeah, ***The Rocketeer*** was mentioned in the headline, wasn't he? ***It's official!*** **Cliff Secord** will be rocketing his way back to stardom in July in ***The Rocketeer Adventure Magazine***.

Just a hint of Stevens' Rockeleer poster.

The first issue contains a new story, called "Cliff's New York Adventure," that picks up where the old plotline left off: **Cliff** still has the rocket pack; he is travelling cross-country to save his girl, **Betty**; he will undoubtedly be pursued by Doc S. . . the mysterious man of bronze; and, according to the press release "All this and WWII."

There will be a back-up in ***TRAM*** of ***Brucilla the Muscle, Galactic Girl Guide*** by MICHAEL W. KALUTA and ELAINE LEE. It's a spin-off from their ***Starstuck*** series.

Next issue is scheduled, tentatively, for fall of this year.

There will also be a **Rocketeer** poster by STEVENS appearing in comic stores right before the comic's release date. It'll be a 15" x 22" reproduction of the cover to ***TRAM*** **#1** and will sell for $4.95.

And . . . more DAVE STEVENS: in August, Comico announced, there will be a project called ***Lust and the Dust*** featuring all-new STEVENS's art. ●

BLACKTHORNE: *JUNGLE* RETURNS; *WEREWOLF* HOWLS

JERRY IGER's ***Jungle Comics***, which under the Fiction House banner in the '40s and '50s featured such characters as **Ka'a'nga, Tabu,** and **Wambi**, respectively the Lord of the Jungle, Wizard of the Jungle, and the Jungle Boy, is being revived as a regular bi-monthly color comic.

Jungle will be a "showcase" book. Issue **#1** features a BRUCE JONES story, art by DRAGAN FLAESC and a **Sheena** cover by DAVE STEVENS.

Sheena seems to be one of the main staples of the revitalized title, even though she originally appeared in ***Jungle***'s almost twin title ***Jumbo***.

Blackthorne also recently resurrected Fiction House's celebrated science fiction title ***Planet Comics***.

Yes, this was in last issue's Coming Distractions, but we had a BRUCE JONES cover there and it should have been the DAVE STEVENS one here.

Under Blackthorne in *this* issue's Coming Distractions is a listing for a comic called ***Werewolf*** by LANCE HAMPTON and RICK ARTHUR. It is taken from the Fox Television TV show of the same name.

Stories will be adaptations of the TV series's scripts. The comic will be bi-monthly, black and white, and sell for $2.00. There will also be a $3.50 one-shot 48-page *3-D* version. ●

Jungle Comics #1—Dave Stevens cover.

OTHER NEWS: CHAYKIN'S *BLACK KISS*; *CAPTAIN POWER*

If you don't remember *Mars Attacks* cards, or if you do, in May there will be a *Mars Attacks* Comic Series from POCKET COMICS. Look for the FREE full-color preview in FANTACO's *Gore Shriek* #4 on sale now.

APPLE: With #5 DON LOMAX's *Vietnam Journal* goes monthly.

CONTINUITY: The "kid" show where you point a gun at the TV and "kill the enemy" comes to comics. *Captain Power* with ART NICHOLS pencilling and NEAL ADAMS doing "tight layouts and inking." (Do you point a gun at the comic?)

ELSEWHERE PRODUCTIONS: the conclusion to the *Kyra Saga* will be out in May. It's a 100-page book selling for $6.95 containing what would have been issues #6, 7, and 8. The story is by LARRY HELLER, art is by ROBIN ATOR, and inking is JEFF REMMER.

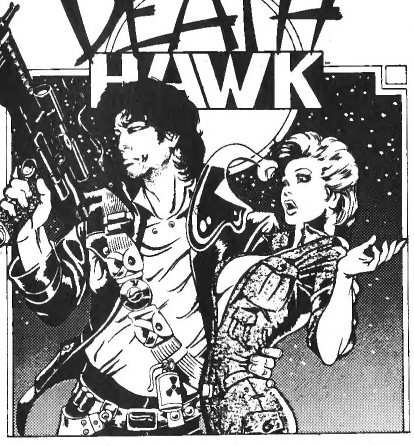
GENESIS WEST: There will be two cover versions of *The Last of the Viking Heroes* #5 available. One drawn by JACK KIRBY and inked by DAVE STEVENS, and the other by creator MIKE THIBODEAUX, who does the interior art as inked by MIKE ROYER and JOE SINNOTT.

SPOTLIGHT: Adding to their line of cartoon comics will be the May debut of *Tom & Jerry and Friends* with a menagerie of funny animals. In #1, KELLEY JARVIS writes and pencils a story with the title characters; Droopy in a tale by TONY BASILICATO, and Screwy Squirrel thanks to JIM MAIN and BASILICATO. There will be a cover by JIM ENGLE and it'll sell for $1.75.

TRIAD: A guide to upcoming issues of *The Honeymooners*: #8 shipping in May contains the story "The Phantom of the Sewers," #9, celebrating summer, will be a baseball issue. The latter has an interview with sportscasting great MEL ALLEN.

The Honeymooners is color, $2.00 with art by VINCE MUSACCHIA, scripts by NORMAN ABRAMOFF, ROBERT LOREN FLEMING, and THOMAS WEST.

VORTEX: "The most controversial book of the decade." "Unrestrained HOWARD CHAYKIN." "An erotic horror book." All descriptions of *Black Kiss*. Shipping in June, this is a 16-page vampire story unlike any other. As we understand it, if you have ever been offended by CHAYKIN, you ain't seen nuthin' yet! Not for the young, not for the easily unsettled, not for the weak of stomach, *Black Kiss* sells for $1.25 and ships in June. ●



Death Hawk: from Adventure Publications: a mercenary and his protoplasmic sidekick, written by Mark Ellis, art by Adam Hughes, color covers by Dave Dorman.

Will Eisner Art Poster—not actual size.

KITCHEN: EISNER POSTER

There will be two versions of the 6-color poster from the New York Museum of Cartoon Art's retrospective on WILL EISNER. The poster features a character from EISNER's *Life Force* graphic novel, surrounded by Spirit splash pages. One is a signed, limited edition of 950, 25" x 39", that goes for $50.00. The other is a 24" x 36" unsigned, for $10.00.

Chips & Vanilla is a one-shot due in June, written and drawn by DOUG POTTER, which shows "what kids really think." It retails for $1.75.

Kitchen is coming out with the following t-shirts: a back cover from the coming Megaton Man mini-series by DON SIMPSON, Omaha by REED WALLER and KATE WORLEY, *Xenozoic Tales* by MARK SCHULTZ, The Spirit by WILL EISNER, and the Kitchen Sink logo. All are $12.95 and in full color except for *The Spirit* in white on black. ●

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Valkyrie, Airboy Romance Brings "Jungle Fire"

Airboy #37 and #38 To Be Overshipped

The long-awaited love scene between Valkyrie and Airboy is finally a reality, as the end of the current adventure in South America brings the two together in an explosion of "Jungle Fire."

"Issue 37 is the end of the Bogantilian adventures," says writer Chuck Dixon, "except for the fact that in #38 Davy has to recover Birdie, who was shot down in #33." Davy, Val, Hirota, and Iron Ace set out to find the downed bat-plane in a tale Dixon stresses is "a good solid *Airboy* adventure in which Davy and Val's relationship comes to the boiling point.

"They go into the deep uncharted recesses of the Bogantilian jungle," Dixon explains, "and they run into a tribe that's never had contact with civilization." The tribe worships a mysterious god of death. *Airboy* #38 also reveals a heretofore unknown option of the Iron Ace's hardware.

But readers will still find the issue most memorable for the huge step taken in the relationship of Valkyrie and Airboy. "The title 'Jungle Fire' refers to the last three pages," says Dixon. "This is the first time Davy and Val have never been alone, and, you know, boy-girl type events take over."

These last three pages presented a new terrain for the prolific action writer. "I was challenged by Cat Yronwode, *Airboy* editor] to write something erotic, so that was exactly what I did," Dixon says. "I've never really written anything like that before, but I enjoyed it—a change of pace."

Dixon feels readers are ready for the events in "Jungle Fire." "I think it's the only move we could have made. Obviously the characters were heading toward this. Now the controversy will probably be over what happens to them afterwards," he says.

Because *Airboy* #37-38 end such a long, involved plotline as well as breaking new ground in these important characters' relationship, Eclipse will be overshipping the issues to distributors. "Retailers should take advantage of this opportunity to ensure that their comics shops make the maximum profit from these key issues," says distribution manager Sara Deming. "Readers should be readily available."

***Airboy* #37, illustrated by Stan Woch and Willie Blyberg, retails for $1.75 and is on sale in March. Issue 38, with art by Gary Kwapisz, ships April 5.**

Prowler Solo Story Featured in *Total Eclipse* #1

Tim Truman, Brent Anderson Team on Ten-Page Tale

A © 1988 J.K. Snyder III

"It's really the perfect way to wrap up *Total Eclipse* #1," says editor Fred Burke of the Super-Series' first ten-page "back-up" story—an serie *Prowler* tale written by Tim Truman, with art by Brent Anderson and Mike Dringenberg.

Although Scott Kida, the young Prowler, fights in *Total Eclipse* almost from page one, it takes a desperate phone call from Scott to Leo Kragg (and a frightening attack on the old man by surrealistic monsters) before the original Prowler becomes involved in the developing turmoil.

"*Prowler* is a series with a very complex mythos," says editor-in-chief Cat Yronwode, "and we wanted to give new readers an idea of who Leo Kragg really is. *Prowler* fans will be pleased to see this installment as well, because it finally reveals the secret behind Leo's abnormal longevity."

Each issue of *Total Eclipse* features a 32-page installment of the Zoed saga by Marv Wolfman, Bo Hampton, and Willie Blyberg. Also included in each issue is an "interlude" by another creative team which focuses on one specific character in the Eclipse Universe. "These interludes play off the events in the main storyline," Burke explains. "They weave into and out of the overall plot like crossovers, but they don't cost anything more."

"The *Prowler* solo really helps to reveal the verisimilitude of the Eclipse Universe," says Burke. "Here you are, reading this action-packed superhero story in Marv's style, and suddenly *Total Eclipse* shifts into a horror tale by Tim Truman. And it works, because the ties are there in both the plot and the theme of longevity in both sequences."

Total Eclipse revolves around Zoed, a character from *Airboy*'s Hillman period. Zoed is immortal, and can only die if the universe dies with him. Weary of life, he puts into motion a complex plot to bring back the Total Eclipse which occurred at his birth, an Eclipse that left him stranded in a life without conclusion.

THIS IS FIT TO PRINT NUMBER 201: Waiting for the Bankisia Rose.

A FEW IMPORTANT THINGS HARD LEARNED: About eight years ago, a friend of my mother's died. Well, to tell the truth, she committed suicide, but she had the best reason in the world: a brain tumour that she believed could not be cured but which, if she was given the usual hospital treatment and life-prolonging therapies, would cause her a lot of anguish and bankrupt her family. She was a nice woman, a very happy person, actually, and she left one of the sweetest "suicide notes" to her friends, apologizing for putting them to any inconvenience and promising that her ghost would not haunt them.

When her daughters came up to claim the various worldly goods they'd been bequeathed, they found a note tied to the car's steering wheel "Next time you get gas, have the oil checked," it read. A mother's last advice.

Now before Kim and Gary go getting their hopes up, I ought to explain that I'm not planning on taking any long voyages to uncharted realms in the near future. Put just in case I do get run over by a trolley before we meet again, there are a few hard learned things I'd like to pass along to you, in the spirit of a mother's last advice.

1) When cutting out blackberry brambles, go real slow. Don't get angry, and above all, don't cut any lengths of vine longer than your arm can reach. Don't get in under the canes either; don't let em get over your head at all. Cut all right-angled branches off from the main stems; don't try to bend 'em back. These little suckers are springy, and they can whip right back and tear your eyes out. Just cut what's in front of you in arm-length sections and haul 'em away to your burn pile. After you're done with that, then you can go back and pull the rootsout.

2) Keep all your comics in plastic bags. Bags are only keep out air, they also provide limited protection against water and smoke damage. Store 'em two to a bag (front sides facing out) and then pack groups of ten into oversize bags. Don't tape the bags.

3) If you find a nest of chicken eggs that the hen hid from you and you don't know how old they are, don't hard or soft boil em. Use them for some recipe (like an omelette or a cake) where you have to break the eggs first. Break each egg separately into a little bowl and smell it. If it's okay, then add it into your mixing bowl. That way you won't ruin the entire batch of eggs if only one or two are bad.

4) Always run colour under black ink, except on b&w one-colour jobs. Best choice is 40% cyan blue, but even 20% will do okay. Black ink is transparent and if it runs without an undercoat, it'll often come out pale and grey.

5) You can generally plant bulbs, seeds, bushes, shrubs, and trees about 10-15% closer together than the nurseries tell you to, as long as you've got fertile soil.

6) Those price stickers that won't come off books without leaving a sticky residue can be removed by carefully pulling off all the paper part and then spraying a little WD-40 on a paper towel and carefully rubbing it over the residual adhesive. The WD-40 dissolves the adhesive, and you can then wipe the surface clean. Believe it or not, if you take it easy, this treatment will not discolour or in any way damage a high-gloss or varnish-printed paper surface.

Next week: advice on record purchases, the care and culture of camellias, how to avoid stiff index stock covers curling, and more!

And I promise: I'll only haunt you if you want me to.

Heading this time by RANDY CRAWFORD.
To see YOUR name in boldface type and your art or lettering here, make FIP logos 8 1/2 inches wide by 3 inches deep and send em to catherine yronwode; p.o. box 1099, forestville, california 95436

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Lucky Winner Takes Wein Quake Chunk

A two-pound chunk of Len Wein's cinder block garden wall, which was but one fatality of the earthquake that rocked Los Angeles on October 1st, 1987, is the lucky prize that goes to sweepstakes entrant W.C. Kramer of Omaha, Nebraska.

Kramer, who buys his Eclipse comics at Star Realm (7305 S. 85th St. in Omaha), termed the lucky sweepstakes "one crazy contest." The quake chunk is signed and dated by Wein himself, the noteworthy co-creator of Swamp Thing, Wolverine, and many other famous characters.

Catherine Yronwode instigated the sweepstakes in her "Penumbra" column. "I was really surprised at the number of people who sent postcards," she said. People will enter just about any contest."

Lucky prize donor Wein recently visited the Eclipse offices to discuss his upcoming scripts for the Heap back-ups in *Airboy* #38-40, illustrated by Carmine Infantino and Mark Pacella. The three-parter, from a story by Lou Mougin, is entitled "Family Ties," and relates the history of Baron Von Emmelmen's (The Heap's) family from World War I to the present day.

"The Heap is different from Swamp Thing or Man-Thing," according to Wein, who has chronicled the adventures of all three famous muck-monsters during his twenty year career. "For one thing, he's been around a lot longer, and for another, he has this obsessive fascination with airplanes, which is, come to think of it, rather strange, considering that he also has the mental equipment of a wall-composted turnip."

A four-issue Heap mini-series by Wein is already in the works for this summer. When asked for advance plot details, Wein said, "It will be strictly a modern-day story, but its roots, like The Heap's, will reach back into the past.

"It was good to visit the offices and get a feel for Eclipse," says Wein, who also has two top-secret non-Heap Eclipse projects in the works. "Coming up to Forestville really made me feel like I fit in. I've always liked Eclipse, and it's great to finally be working here."

SHIPPING

Eclipse – February 23rd

Red Dog #1
Mai #19
Aren 88 #19
Crossfire #26
Millennium Index #2

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ROBOT Battalion 2050 Mixes The Arms Race With Big Teddy Bears

Cheap, Shoddy Robots Finally Make Debut

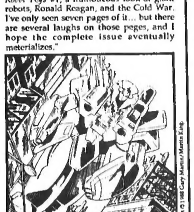
"This is the validation of ten years of hard work," sells writer Beppe Sabatini of the debut of his new comic *ROBOT Battalion 2050*, with art by Gary Martin, Martin King, and Jeff Albrecht.

"I got the xeroxes from Fred [Burke, editor] in the mail, and it was a pleasant surprise and a shock to see that this book—which I've worked so hard on—*existed*," Sabatini says. "You get so close to the material, working on a book, that sometimes you forget that effer it's all ever, there's actually going to be a comic."

ROBOT Battalion 2050 went through some radical changes on its way to the nation's comic shops. Originally titled *Cheap Shoddy Robot Toys*, the book's sales suffered from the stigma attached to four-word parody books.

Feeling the book wasn't getting the attention it deserved, publisher Dean Mullaney and distribution manager Sean Deming worked with Sabatini to come up with a more saleworthy title, and a new cover (by Bill Sienkiewicz) was commissioned.

Previewed in *Amazing Heroes* #135, the book has also received favourable comment from Don Thompson, co-editor of *CBG*. "My favourite title of the year has yet to appear (it was supposed to ship last November) and may never appear," he said in a recent review. "It's *Cheap Shoddy Robot Toys* #1, a humourous look at giant robots, Ronald Reagan, and the Cold War. I've only seen seven pages of it... but there are several laughs on those pages, and I hope the complete issue eventually materializes."



Sabatini is also glad to see *ROBOT Battalion 2050* materialize, particularly with the strong appeal of the finished art. "Even though I knew all the artists I had working on it were good, the finished art was even better than I hoped it would be. It exceeded my high expectations," he says.

Another colour book by Sabatini is already in the plans. "I'm trying to come up with something that will make so much money for Eclipse that they'll have to rent another office to store their money in."

ROBOT Battalion 2050 is in the deluxe black and white format and retails for $2.00. It's on sale now, folks.

SHIPPING

Shipping 3/1/88	Shipping 3/8/88
Eclipse Extra #41	Area 88 #20
Fusion #8	Lost Planet #5
Xenon #7	Mai, the Psychic Girl #20
Kamui #20	ROBOT Battalion 2050 #1
Scout: War Shaman #1	Target: Airboy #1
Swords of Texas #4	Winterworld #3
Xenon #7	

"Our responsibility to you doesn't end at the cash register."

DEAN MULLANEY

Eclipse Publisher Dean Mullaney's personal statement of commitment to retailers.

Mullaney Guarantees *Total Eclipse*

Fans Can Return Super-Series If Not Totally Satisfied

The first pages of *Total Eclipse* art by Bo Hampton and Willie Blyberg are in, the story has been completely plotted by writer Mary Wolfman, and Eclipse publisher Dean Mullaney has decided that the result is good enough to guarantee. This week Mullaney announced a plan to issue "Eclipse Bucks" to any unsatisfied fan. These "Eclipse Bucks" could be used at any comics shop to purchase any other Eclipse title.

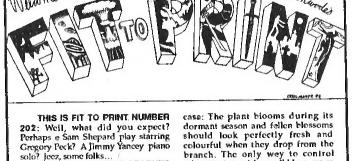
"If you (the fan) are not completely satisfied with any issue of *Total Eclipse*," Mullaney says, "you can return it to us and we'll send you 'Eclipse Bucks' for an equivalent value. You can redeem these 'Eclipse Bucks' at your local comics shop for any other Eclipse comics of your choice."

Mullaney thinks the guarantee is one more reason for retailers to order plenty of copies of *Total Eclipse*. "Publishers are always telling [retailers] how great their new series are and why you should order heavy on them. But how many [publishers] will guarantee their sales with their own wallets?! None of them but me. I will guarantee your sales on *Total Eclipse*," said Mullaney in a letter to retailers.

"Eclipse Bucks' are to be spent by the fan for the purchase of other Eclipse comics. You [the retailer] cash in the Eclipse bucks, and we'll reimburse you for the full wholesale value of the returned issue.

"In other words, if your customers aren't completely satisfied with *Total Eclipse*, you can't lose. Even if the fan doesn't like *Total Eclipse*, you've still made your sale... plus, you'll sell them an equivalent retail value in your other Eclipse stock. You make out twice as good!" Mullaney continued.

"I'm putting my profit on the line, because I'm confident that *Total Eclipse* will sell twice as well—if not three times as well—as any other current Eclipse title," he concluded.



THIS IS FIT TO PRINT NUMBER 202: Well, what did you expect? Perhaps a Sam Shepard play starring Gregory Peck? A Jimmy Yancey piano solo? Jeez, some folks...

A FEW MORE HARD LEARNED LESSONS: Continuing from last issue, this is the conclusion of the hard learned truths I wish to pass on to you before I pass on myself.

7) Always buy original pressings of records you like and play them on original equipment, whether the originals are on 78, 45 or lp format. Original pressings have greater tonal range than any form of repressing, provided the material is in mint or near mint condition. If original pressings are hard to find or too costly, shop carefully for repressings. Don't ever buy repressed stereo records made from monophonic masters. They're never any good. Digital remastering (on cd or lp) is okay, particularly if the original masters were on tape. If the originals were metal or acetate masters, wax cylinders, or transcription discs, digital remastering is a two-stage process; first to tape "masters" and then to digitalization. The results will only be as good as the talent of the technician who does the double-transfer job, so don't expect miracles.

8) Women, never marry or attempt to have children with any man who makes fun of the way pregnant women look. Try for a guy who goes all emotional and tender whenever he sees a pregnant woman in the supermarket check-out line. He'll make a better father for your kids.

9) The camellia disease known as sclerotinia or petal rot is a fungus which winters over in fallen blossoms and infects new blossoms the next spring. Sclerotinia does not harm the camellia tree itself, only the flower petals, but in some districts it is so common that gardeners believe it is "normal" for camellia flowers to turn brown and gooey before they fall. Such is not the case: The plant blooms during its dormant season and fallen blossoms should look perfectly fresh and colourful when they drop from the branch. The only way to control sclerotina is to pick up all blossoms as they fall and BURN them. Do not compost them, as this will not kill the sclerotina spores. It is very hard to get rotting camellia flowers to burn. You'll need plenty of gasoline. The aroma of rotting, fungus-infested camellia flowers burning is somewhat like that of fresh-brewed Chinese tea. Enjoy it.

10) When ordering varnished or laminated cerd-stock covers for graphic albums, make sure that the printer cuts the paper so the grain doesn't cause the covers to curl up. Even with this precaution, covers printed and varnished or laminated back East in winter are more apt to curl than other covers because of the low humidity in artificially heated shops. In the West, where winter means lots of rain, this is not such a big problem. Storing tightly packed boxes of curly-covered albums in a damp garage or barn will cause them to relax and flatten out eventually, but the problem will occur again as soon as the books are sold and taken into dry houses.

11) Cat flea collars cause cancer. Don't let your pet wear them. You may think collars are safer for the animal than periodic washing with poisonous soaps, but consider: Smoking one big fat cigar every two months is less likely to give you cancer then smoking a pack of thin little cigarettes every day. Same principle.

12) Set your Ames lettering guide at 3 1/2 on the non-metric scale (for 10 x 15 artwork) and use the evenly-spaced holes. Do two, skip one, do two, skip one. At this size the letters can be exactly covered by Avery One-Line Correction Tape, which is faster than white-out at correction time.

Good luck in life, and write if you get work, okay?

Heading this time by CRAIG ("LINEN FINISH") MAHER
To see YOUR name in boldface type and your art or lettering here, make FIP logos 8 1/2 inches wide by 3 inches deep and send 'em to catherine yronwode, p.o. box 1059, forestville, california 95436

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Xenon Sales Rise With Issue #7

New Readers Continue To Pick Up Cyborg Tale

Xenon, the latest manga bi-weekly from Eclipse International and Viz Comics, continues its slow burning success. "Sales on *Xenon* went up with issue #7," says distribution manager Sean Deming, "and we're expecting back issue prices to continue to rise."

The first issue of Masaomi Kanzaki's *Xenon* was an instant sell-out, much like the either three manga translations, and new readers continue to pick up the book. "I think issue #7 sold better because it's such a good place to start collecting the book," says Deming. The issue includes a test piece to help new readers catch up and is also the first episode in a new storyline.

"*Xenon* is just the thing for superhero readers who have been asking us to do an action-oriented manga," says editor Letitia Clayton. "*Xenon* is cyborg action from cover to cover. It's also the closest thing to fighting robots that we have in our manga lineup."

"I think the book has a very odd appeal," says co-translator Fred Burke, "Kanzaki wrote and drew *Xenon* when he was very young, and I think it has a certain naiveté because of that. *Xenon's* just a cousing comp, the sort of thing comics used to be in less cynical days. With cyborg transformations and heavy artillery thrown in, of course."

Xenon retails for $1.50 and ships twice a month. Issue #7 of the deluxe black and white is now on sale.

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May 1-15 COMING DISTRACTIONS!

AARDVARK ONE INTERNATIONAL

☐ **PUMA BLUES #19**
(*CENSORED*)—by the Committee
Against Strange Colored Animals.
Story ..... **Steven Murphy**
Art ..... **Micheel Zuill**
[$1.70 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

☐ **CEREBUS #109**
You sey you've never seen en eardverk before, then take a peek at comicdom's longest running independent funny animel. Comes complete with sword.
Story ..... **Deve Sim**
Art ..... **Sim & Gerherd**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

ADVENTURE PUBL.

☐ **ADVENTURERS BOOK II #0**
Continuitists can start pulling heir, here's the "long ewaited" #0 origin story to understand the horrific Man Gods and their complicated storylines.
Story ..... **Mark Ellie**
Art ..... **Kent Burlee**
Cover ..... **Ien McCelg**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **DEATH HAWK #1 & 2**
Deeth Hewk the bounty hunter end his protoplasmic sidekick, Cyke, teke off on en adventure ecross the galaxy in search of the long lost Soulworm. Action, adventure, deeth, end yes, this is for reel.
Story ..... **Merk Ellie**
Art ..... **Adam Hughes**
Cover ..... **Deve Dormen**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **NINJA ELITE #8**
The deeth of the Amite K'un, the destruction of House Dracus end more in the conclusion/*Adventurers* crossover issue!
Story ..... **Merk Ellie**
Art ..... **Gebriel Morrisette**
Cover ..... **Deve Dormen**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **WARRIORS #6**
Pert three of the Shedolok storyline.
Cover ..... **Ien McCelg**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

AIRCEL

☐ **DRAGONFORCE #1**
The days of Dregonring were long, but ere gone. Now there's DRAGONFORCE!
Story/Art ..... **Keown & Bleir**
[$2.00 color comic; ships in May]

☐ **ELFLORD #20**
Hawk, Windblede & company fight the Overlord to a standstill. Whet next? It's Miller time! Frenk Miller? No, Steve Miller. He runs e health food shop et 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY.
Story/Art ..... **Berry Bleir**
[$2.00 color comic; ships in May]

☐ **GREENHAVEN #3**
Falcon & Purebreeze barely (by the skin of their teeth) escape deeth by Cardinel decree, and still heve to find the missing Hewk. (See *Elflord*, ebove.)
Story/Art ..... **Berry Bleir**
[$2.00 color comic; ships in May]

☐ **MAELSTROM #12**
Meel feces identity end energy crises es he trevels across dimensions to continue the fight with the not-so-grateful Dead.
Story/Art ..... **Jim Somerville**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **SAMURAI #4**
The truths that bind Hotechi, Splinter, the Master, Lady of the Leke end Toshiro's swords ere reveeled.
Story ..... **Roger Cam**
Art ..... **Gueng Yep**
[$2.00 color comic; ships in May]

☐ **WARLOCK 5 #15**
The Guerdians band together to fece the common menace of income texes.
Story ..... **Gordon Derry**
Art ..... **Denis Beeuvele**
[$1.70 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

AMERICOMICS

☐ **FEMFORCE #13**
The She-Cat is nasty, self-serving, end vicious. And those are her good qualities. Any volunteers to save her from herself should call Wes, et (311) 767-0199.
Story ..... **Wee Covington**
Art ..... **Secreese & Bleck**
[$1.95 color comic; ships in May]

APPLE COMICS

☐ **BLOOD OF DRACULA #7**
Two bizerre Dracu-treats, with "Deeth Dreems of Drecula" and "Count Drecule."
Story ..... **Rickey Shenklin**
Art ..... **Boyette, Vokes, Hughes & Wheetley**

Cover ..... **Charles Vess**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **FANTASCI #9**
This FINAL ISSUE is also the first of the new "Apple Turnovers", with two stories, "Captain Obese" and "A Hero Named Harold" leading from opposite covers of the book.
Covers ..... **Lomex & Devlee**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **VIETNAM JOURNAL #5**
"Hawks of the Darkhorse" takes a look at the war from the air in a small, darting LOACH helicopter.
Story/Art ..... **Don Lomex**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

ARCHIE COMICS

☐ **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES #1**
New! Improved! At last meet Raphael, Leonardo, Donatello & Michelangelo, those hard-shelled, lovable ninja are available in full, living color!

Story/Art ..... **Eastman & Laird**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 5/17]

Plus, the usual fare of goodies for May, still for a paltry 75¢:
Adventures of Kool-Aid Man #5, Archie #360, Archie At Riverdale High #586, Archie's Pals N' Gals #200, Betty & Me #170, Betty & Veronica #13, Betty & Veronica Spectacular#588, Betty's Diary #20, Life With Archie #268, The New Archies #8, Pep #590, World of Archie #587, World of Jugheed #589.
And, as usual, here are a few digests to tide you over until next month. At $1.35: **Archie Annual Digest #53, Archie's Double Digest #36, Betty & Veronica Digest #32, Jughead With Archie Digest #86, Katy Keene Digest #3, Laugh Comics Digest #78, Little Archie Digest #32, New Archies Digest #3.**

BLACKTHORNE

☐ **BATTLE BEASTS #4**
Beast vs. beast, each in his element. Just like on TV.
Story ..... **John Stephenson**
Art ..... **Ice & Hendrix**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; bi-monthly; ships in May]

☐ **BATTLETECH IN 3-D #2**
Five cadets pit their puny power against that of the Black Widow Company. Based on the BATTLETECH role playing game.
Story ..... **Joe Judt**
Art ..... **Pat Zircher**
[$2.50 comic in 3-D; ships in May]

☐ **CALIFORNIA RAISINS IN 3-D #3**
Those raisin hipsters buy a palace in the sun, but they might find themselves burned by the return of the dastardly Big Burger!
Story/Art ..... **David Cody Weiss**
[$2.50 color comic in 3-D; ships in May]

☐ **DICK TRACY WEEKLY #42-45**
Rainbow Reilly, Sparkle, Little Wingy and George Ozone back Tracy as he faces Roghead and Mumbles with wit, wisdom, and his two-way teleguard!
Story/Art ..... **Chester Gould**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; one ships each week in May]

☐ **G.I. JOE IN 3-D #5**
Storm Shadow and Snake Eyes run a cross-country gauntlet of cruelly contrived COBRA contraptions.
Story ..... **John Stephenson**
Art ..... **Adrian Moro**
[$2.50 color comic in 3-D; ships in May]

☐ **THE OFFICIAL HOW TO DRAW G.I. JOE #6**
All-villain issue with how-tos for Zarana, Raptor & Cobra Mamba.
Discussion ..... **Robert Miller**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in April]

☐ **THE OFFICIAL HOW TO DRAW ROBOTECH #16**
The latest technological leakage on Max Sterling, Khyron, Miriya & Battlepods.
How-To ..... **Dennis Francis**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **THE OFFICIAL HOW TO DRAW THE TRANSFORMERS #7**
What makes them tick (or toc!)? Find out about the Terrorcons, Hun-Gurr & Sinner Twin.
Info-Bot ..... **Dennis Francis**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **PLANET COMICS #2**
The unusual adventures of Hunt Bowman, Flamingo & the Secret Circle, each in his/her own adventure.
Contributors ..... **Jones, Hooper Rivel & Moro**
Cover ..... **Dave Stevens**
[$2.00 color comic; ships in May]

☐ **SERIOUS BOUNTY HUNTER #4**
The complete tale of psycho-gothicism after the fall of mankind.
Story/Art ..... **Evan Thomas**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **TRACKER #1**
The explicit exploits of a hardboiled gumshoe being squeezed out of business by the dawn of the superhero era.
Story/Art ..... **William Van Horn**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **WEREWOLF #1**
Eric's life was fine, until his friend Ted confessed to being a werewolf. Eric reluctantly agrees to kill him (What are friends for, after all?), but soon finds himself wanted for murder and on the run from a curse he can never escape alive.
Story ..... **Lance Hampton**
Art ..... **Rick Arthur**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

CA COMICS

☐ **AGENT ORANGE #2**
Action on a parallel Earth, where vegetation evolved as the dominant form of life. Can Orange and his sidekick Tangerine escape the gellatin-filled trap of the Kiwi, or will they meet their end as a blend fruit salad?
Story ..... **Dan Nakrosis**
Art ..... **Richard Behrle**
[$1.70 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **NEW HAMSTER VICE #1**
Wolph, Hammy and Ben are back with new costumes and a full explanation of Hammy's mysterious powers & abilities.
Story ..... **Dwayne Ferguson**
Art ..... **Ferguson & Meslick**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

COMICO

☐ **FISH POLICE VOL. 2#6**
Hook kills Inspector Gill's partner of six hours, so Gill swears a blood-crazed vendetta to even the score, in his spare time.
Story ..... **Steve Moncuse**
Art ..... **Moncuse & Vincent**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 5/3]

☐ **GRENDEL #19**
Nobody likes a stool pigeon, especially not Grendel! Plus, the final MAGE installment to hit the stands for at least another year. MATURE.
Story ..... **Matt Wagner**
Art ..... **Wagner & Vincent**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 5/3]

☐ **JAM SPECIAL #1**
"The Super Cool Color-Injected Turbo Adventure #1 from Hell!"
The Jammer foils a robbery attempt, only to face a stiff moral dilemma and a month's rent to pay.
Story/Art ..... **Bernie Mireault**
[$2.50 color comic; ships 5/3]

☐ **JUSTICE MACHINE #17**
"And Four To Go"
Blazer and Youthquake are the last of the team to remain unchanged by Hamilton, but the only way to run on an island is straight out of luck.
Story ..... **Doug Murray**
Art ..... **Levins & Gustovich**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 5/3]

☐ **ROBOTECH, THE MACROSS SAGA #27**
"Force of Arms"
Glovel is forced to ally himself with the Zentraedi commanders when Dolze shows up to do battle . . . 4 million ships strong!
Story ..... **Markaian Joplin**
Art ..... **Leeke & Chen**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 5/3]

COMICS INTERVIEW

☐ **ARISTOCRATIC XTRATERRESTRIAL TIME-TRAVELLING THIEVES#10**
The most dangerous force in the universe just lost his job. Now he's armed and dangerous, and all four kid gloves come off for the apprehension of Fred & Bianca.
Story ..... **Henry Vogel**
Art ..... **Mark Propst**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **ARISTOCRATIC X-THIEVES GRAPHIC ALBUM**
Reprinted from the early adventures of those time-travelling thieves, Fred & Bianca, who are out to steal art from Marvel, the original formula for Coca-Cola, and reality from the comics industry.
Story ..... **Henry Vogel**
Art ..... **Mark Propst**
[$6.50 black-and-white graphic album; ships in May]

☐ **EARLY DAYS OF THE SOUTHERN KNIGHTS GRAPHIC ALBUM**
Early adventures as the Southern Knights battle beastly dragons from the North.
Story ..... **Henry Vogel**
Art ..... **Chuck Wojtkiewicz**
[$5.95 black-and-white graphic album; ships in May]

C & T GRAPHICS

C & T is warming up for spring with a new line of black-and-whites at $1.75:
ALL-MONSTER COMICS #1
By ..... **Corrigan, Keeter, Rann Taylor & more**
ASININE HEAD #1
By ..... **Brian Kirk**
THE FINAL MAN #2
By ..... **Maherae & Corrigan**
KIWANNI-DAUGHTER OF THE DAWN #2
By ..... **Mayer, Jupiter Peck & Corrigan**
NIGHTSTAR #1
By ..... **Larry Blake**
WHAT, HONKO AGAIN? #1
By ..... **Bob Supina**

DC COMICS

☐ **ACTION COMICS WEEKLY #606-608**
Because monthly wasn't good enough! DC action featuring: SUPERMAN, by **Beatty, Stern & Swan**, GREEN LANTERN, by **Owsley & Smith**, DEADMAN, by **Baron, Jurgens & DeZuniga**, SECRET SIX, by **Pasko & Spiegle**, WILD DOG, by **Collins, Beatty & Nyberg**, and BLACKHAWK, by **Grell, Burchett & Mercos**.
Covers ..... **Gammill, Nyberg Lightle & Smith**
[$1.50 color comic; ships 5/12,19,26.]

☐ **ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN ANNUAL #2**
"The Exiles"
Clark Kent ships off to the Middle East and finds a danger much greater than any terrorist. Bad baklava? Overstuffed grape leaves? Or is it? Could it be . . . SATAN!
Story ..... **Byrne & Ordway**
Art ..... **Stetema**
Cover ..... **Jerry Ordway**
[$1.50 color comic; ships 4/26; newsstand o/s 5/19]

☐ **BATMAN #423**
How well do you know the Batman? Who is he *really*? Find out.
Story ..... **Jim Starlin**
Art ..... **Dave Cockrum**
[75¢ color comic; ships 5/26; newsstand o/s 6/18]

☐ **CHECKMATE #6**
Tempers flare with a rocket's red glare as a secret arms deal goes sour. Plus, more "Training of a Knight."
Story ..... **Paul Kupperberg**
Art ..... **Thilbert, Erwin & Vey**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/12]

☐ **COPS #1**
"Fighting Crime in a Future Time"
A federal agent comes back from the dead to assemble the Central Organization of Police Specialists . . . COPS, the elite crime-fighting team of the future.
Story ..... **Doug Moench**
Art ..... **Pat Broderick**
[$1.50 color comic; ships 5/12; newsstand o/s 6/4]

☐ **CRIMSON AVENGER #4 (of 4)**
Manhattan skies are looking fine in the final showdown with the Dark Cross.
Story ..... **Thomas & Thomas**
Art ..... **Greg Brooke**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 5/19]

☐ **DETECTIVE COMICS ANNUAL #1**

"The Monkey Trap"
The Penguin returns, and he's far deadlier than ever. Can Batz put him back on ice where he belongs? He'll need help. To be continued in *Green Arrow & The Question Annuals*. MATURE.
Story ..... **Dennie O'Neil**
Art ..... **Kieue Jeneon**
[$1.50 color comic; ships 5/26]

☐ **FIRESTORM THE NUCLEAR MAN #75**
"The Return of Martin Stein"
Story ..... **John Ostrender**
Art ..... **Brozowski & DeLeRosa**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 5/19; newsstand o/s 6/11]

☐ **FLASH #16**
Wally West confronts the Speed Demon & Blue Trinity in a hospital zone. Shhh. It's the quietest Flash battle ever . . . or else!
Story ..... **Willem Messner-Loebe**
Art ..... **LaRocque & Mahlstedt**
Cover ..... **George Peraz**
[75¢ color comic; ships 5/12; newsstand o/s 6/4]

☐ **GREEN ARROW #8**
The Green Arrow strings his bow in Alaska to stop the Tong drug traffic to the West Coast.
Story ..... **Mike Grell**
Art ..... **Hennigen & Giordeno**
[$1.00 color comic; MATURE; ships 5/26]

☐ **HELLBLAZER #9**
Constantine edges toward personal disaster, as his delusions take him deep into the swamp. Guest stars Moss Men, ake Swamp Thing.
Story ..... **Jemie Deleno**
Art ..... **Aicele & Ridgwey**
Cover ..... **Deve McKean**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/26]

☐ **JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL #17**
JLI's vacation to Bielya is threetened by rain and e run-in with a redioactive Queen Bee.
Story ..... **Giffen & DeMetteie**
Art ..... **Meguire & Gordon**
[75¢ color comic; ships 5/19; newsstand o/s 6/11]

☐ **LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #50**
Death, destruction, cheese & pepperoni in the final conflagration with Time Treeper.
Story ..... **Peul Levitz**
Art ..... **Giffen & DeCerlo**
Cover ..... **Ken Steecy**
[$2.50 color comic; ships 5/26]

☐ **MANHUNTER #3**
Manhunter gets help from the Yakuza to get away from Dumas and out of Japan.
Story ..... **Oetrender & Yele**
Art ..... **Rice & Keith**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 5/12; newsstand o/s 6/4]

☐ **OUTCASTS #12 (of 12)**
FINAL ISSUE.
The tate ot Big City, Orcom, and the Outcasts is seeled. Or was it see-loned?
Story ..... **Wegner & Grent**
Art ..... **Kennedy & Monteno**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 5/19]

☐ **SECRET ORIGINS #30**
Elastic hero issue, with the origins of PLASTICMAN, by **Thomee & Austen**; and the ELONGATED MAN, guest starring the FLASH, by **Jones, Templeton & Miehm**.
Cover ..... **Ty Templeton**
[$1.50 color comic; ships 5/26; newsstand o/s 6/18]

☐ **STAR TREK #54**
Finnegan appears out of Kirk's distant pest to investigate his recent brush with death.
Story ..... **Peter David**
Art ..... **Purceli & Villagran**
Cover ..... **Moore & Wilson**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 5/26; newsstand o/s 5/18]

☐ **SUPERMAN #23**
The origin of the Silver Benshee, the villein most successful et "killing" Supermen.
Story ..... **John Byrne**
Art ..... **Beatty & Byrne**
[75¢ color comic; ships 5/26; newsstand o/s 6/18]

☐ **TAILGUNNER JO #1**
When the Telemechus Corporation let her see two worlds at once, she was grateful. But when they kidnapped her mother, they just made her med. Now someone'e gonne get his tail gunned off, if Jo has her way. MATURE.
Story ..... **Peter Gillis**
Art ..... **Artie & Templeton**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/26]

☐ **V FOR VENDETTA #1 (of 10)**
World Wer III ushered in e new ere of fascism, but V hes hed enough. Who is V? Why does he seek revenge? Will he find his lest neme somewhere? Reprints the originel work in full color, end finally finishes the story, begun so long ego!
Story ..... **Alan Moore**
Art ..... **Devid Lloyd**
[$2.00 color comic; ships 5/19; MATURE]

☐ **WHO'S WHO '88 #2 (of 4)**
The revised information of DC cherecters, such es the JOKER, JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL & LORI LEMARIS.
Cover ..... **Ty Templeton**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/26; newsstand o/s 6/18]

☐ **WONDER WOMAN #20**
"Who Killed Myndi Meyer?"
No, Who's on first! Who is Who, enywey?
Story ..... **George Perez**
Art ..... **Perez & McLeod**
[75¢ color comic; ships 5/12; newsstand o/s 6/4]

☐ **WORLD OF METROPOLIS #2**
Lois Lane (age 16) faces the menacing mechanations of Lex Luthor.
Story ..... **John Byrne**
Art ..... **Mortimer, Giordano & McLaughlin**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 5/19; newsstand o/s 6/11]

☐ **YOUNG ALL-STARS #16**
The Vril, Dr. Thule, and the origin of Neptune Perkine. What more could you went for ten bits?
Story ..... **Thomas & Thomas**
Art ..... **Bair & Jones**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/12]

EARTH PRIME

☐ **IRUKASHI #1**
When the eliene bred the master race, they didn't count on humen compassion to etop the nigh-inevitele dominetion of plenet Eerth. Silly eliens.
Art ..... **Kevin Grays**
[$1.75 color comic; ships in May]

EASTERN COMICS

☐ **BLACKMASK #2**
Jason finds the wrestling ring to be no bed of roses, but he promises to grow daisies somedey.
Story ..... **Jong-Jin Lee**
Art ..... **Frenz Henkel**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **DEMON WARRIOR #6**
Ryong flees from one demonic disaster into another in "Out of the Wok, into the Fire."
Story/Art ..... **Jee Hak Lee**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **FORBIDDEN KINGDOM #3**
On his perilous journey to meet the Handang, Sein remembers to take some time off to stop and smell the bamboo.
Story/Art ..... **Sung nam He**
Translation ..... **Franz Henkel**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

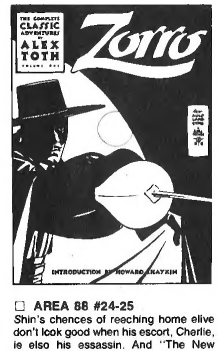
☐ **TRICKSTER KING MONKEY #1**
Born of e etone end megically armed to the teeth, he's the Trickster Monkey, end he's going to do that which can not, *must not*, be done. From the Chinese folk classic by **Wu Cheng-en**.
Story/Art ..... **Hyun-Jong Choi**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

ECLIPSE COMICS

☐ **AIRBOY #39**
"A Wire Down"
It's Birdie versus the plane of the future in the high-flyin skies of Texas. Plus, more on THE HEAP, from **Len Wein & Carmine Infantino**.
Story ..... **Chuck Dixon**
Art ..... **Woch & Blyberg**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 5/3]

☐ **AIRFIGHTERS CLASSICS #4**
Reprints the fifth issue of the Golden Age *Air Fighters Comics*, with Airboy battling e U-boat and Iron Ace steeling himself against the hemmer of mighty Thor!
Finishing ..... **Miyako Grahem**
Editor ..... **Cet Yronwode**
[$3.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **ALEX TOTH'S ZORRO VOLUME ONE**
See the adventures of the original sword swinger from the DISNEY edventures of the 50's & 60's. They chenged Bruce Weyne's life, they could change yours as well! With intro by **Howerd Cheykin**.
Story/Art ..... **Alex Toth**
[$9.95 black-and-white graphic novel; ships in May]



☐ **AREA 88 #24-25**
Shin's chences of reeching home elive don't lcok good when his escort, Cherlie, ie elso his essassin. And "The New Wings" ere put to the test by Mick in en ell-too-real exercise in aerial combet.
Story/Art ..... **Keoru Shintani**
[$1.50 blnck-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **FUSION #9**
Transmission trouble puts Dow, Carz & Indio in trouble even faster then they could do it themselves. Plus, more from "Weasel Petrol", by **Dowling & Macklin**.
Story ..... **Steve Gellecci**
Art ..... **Gellecci & Dowling**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **KAMUI #24-25**
A net of deedly ninje's and an old samurei's pact with the *kogeshiro* merk the deys left to Kemui.
Story/Art ..... **Senpei Shireto**
[$1.75 blnck-and-white comic; mature; ships in May]

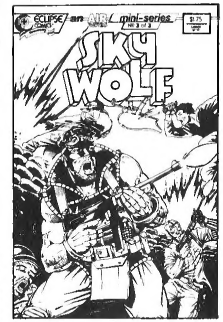
☐ **MAI, THE PSYCHIC GIRL #24-25**
"Danger Approeching"
Shuichi must decide whether to save Mei's life and control the world, or fece deeth from the Wisdom Alliance. Easy choice, eh? Until Intetsu shows up egein.
Story ..... **Kazuye Kudo**
Art ..... **Ryoichi Ikegemi**
[$1.50 blnck-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **MIRACLEMAN FAMILY #1 (of2)**
The MIRACLEMAN (MervelMen) legend sterted in England in 1954 end built the momentum of e locomotive by the time it hit the 80's. Now see MM, Young Miraclemen & Kid Miracleman face the teersome foes that shaped the series end changed the face of comics on both sides of the North Atlentic..
Story/Art ..... **Mick Anglo Studio**
[$1.95 color comic; Five Star format;ships 5/12]

☐ **POWER COMICS #2 (of 4)**
Eclipse Internetional and Acme Press combine to present more adventures of Africe's Action Ace, es he combets the hideous Dr. Crime in "The Return of Dr. Crime", by **Brien Bolland** and "The All-African Wrestling Championship", from **Deve Gibbone**.
Cover ..... **Brien Bolend**
[$2.00 blnck-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **SCOUT: WAR SHAMAN #2**
Scout and company investigate the unexpected success of a wilderness town and discover e seething cauldon of corruption & e new erch-enemy, Redwire, who knows much more then he should ebout the intrepid bend of heroes.
Story ..... **Tim Trumen**
Art ..... **Herkine & Parsons**
[$1.95 color comic; ships 5/3]

☐ **SKYWOLF #2 (of 3)**
Skywolf, Bald Eegle, and Baron von Tundre fight side-by-side for survival in Dien Bien Phu, Vietnem 1954.
Story ..... **Chuck Dixon**
Art ..... **Tom Lyle**
[$1.75 deluxe color comic; ships 4/19]



☐ **WALT KELLY'S SPRINGTIME TALES #2**
Peter Wheat and the Little Folk of the wheet field fece e fierce spring tlood, and the goblins are out in force in two classic adventures from the men who brought you Pogo.
Story/Art ..... **Welt Kelly**
[$2.00 blnck-and-white comic; ships in April]

☐ **XENON #11-12**
"The Roaming of Demons"
When a cyborg battles its human soul, one must surely die. But which? Xenon and the Demon Three finish it for good, in en blazing, bloody battle with Sonoko in the middle.
Story/Art ..... **Mesaomi Kanzaki**
[$1.50 blnck-and-white comic; ships in May]

ELSEWHERE PROD.

☐ **THE KYRA BOOK**
"Kegeene's End"
The tinel conclusion to the sage of the emazon with the thunder thighs.
Story ..... **Lerry Heller**
Art ..... **Ator & Remmer**
[$6.95 blnck-and-white trede paperback; ships in May]

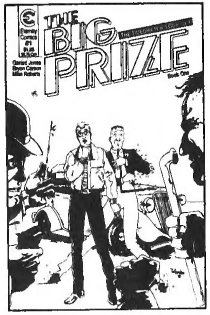
ENTERTAINMENT

☐ **DELTA TENN #6**
"The Burger Mac Conspirecy"
Delte gets ceught in e test-food murder monopoly, end she doesn't like it one bit! Looks like she finally bit off more than she can chew, or digest, for that metter.
Art ..... **Merk Merderosien**
[$1.50 blnck-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. #7**
"The Wild Water Affair"
Nepoleon & Illye must stop a town full of zombies before the telent scouts errive to dreft them in e mejor motion picture.
Story ..... **Stan Timmone**
Art ..... **Peul Daly**
[$1.75 blnck-and-white comic; ships in May]

ETERNITY COMICS

☐ **BIG PRIZE #1**
"The Timedrifters Odyssey Book One" Now, the exciting adventures of Willis, in the living hall of the 1930's Hollywood.
Story ..... **Gerard Jonas**
Art ..... **Carson & Roberts**
Cover ..... **Tim Hamilton**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]



☐ **BLOODWING #4**
The mysterious origin of Bloodwing unfolds in "Back to the Cabbage Patch", or "I Was a Teenage Vampire."
Story ..... **Bill Spangler**
Art ..... **Gallagher & Laing**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **DARK WOLF #4**
Dark Wolf tights to stop the evil Agle Shaker, who threatens to rock the boat, step out of line, and upset the cosmic balance between good and evil.
Story ..... **R.A. Jones**
Art ..... **Butch Burcham**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **DINOSAURS FOR HIRE #2**
Archie, Reece & Lorenzo are sent to Europe to rest and recuperate after last issue's destruction of downtown (uptown, anytown) Manhattan.
Story ..... **Tom Mason**
Art ..... **Carson & Leonina**
Cover ..... **Carson & Henne**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **EMPIRE #3**
King Stephen launches an attack on Albion, while Opal learns the ways of war.
Story ..... **Paul O'Connor**
Art ..... **Gallagher & Henna**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

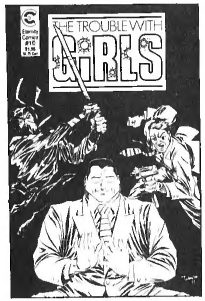
☐ **EX-MUTANTS: SHATTERED EARTH CHRONICLES #2**
Baseball lives forever in the land-mined fields of Yankee Stadium, though the quality of hotdogs has been known to deteriorate.
Story ..... **Paul O'Conner**
Art ..... **Metoe, Ceton & Pelmlotti**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **EX-MUTANTS GRAPHIC NOVEL: GODS OR MEN VOL. TWO**
With all the material you missed so much from *Ex-Mutants #4-7*.
Story ..... **David Lawrence**
Art ..... **Lim, Dzon & Atkinson**
Cover ..... **Ron Lim**
[$7.95 black-and-white graphic novel; ships in May]

☐ **FIST OF GOD #1**
Mick Taggert was a man of action, comfortable with no one, including himself. But in Persia he became something great...an outlaw, a criminal by the name of El Oebda Al-Alleh—The Fist of God.
Story ..... **R.A. Jonee**
Art ..... **Butch Burcham**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **NEW HUMANS #6**
Gabriella Fish, a bald beauty with a love for leather and shotguns, joins the Ex-Mutants, and the Shattered Earth will never be it's old, quiet self again.
Story ..... **Paul O'Connor**
Art ..... **Myke & Pelmlotti**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **OUTLANDER #7**
Gallow follows a trail of tears and fear to reach Doc Havok, the latest overdosed refugee from the Institute.
Story ..... **Scott Finlay**
Art ..... **Brooks Hagen**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]



☐ **THE TROUBLE WITH GIRLS #10**
Les and Apache Dick find their path to spiritual Zen fulfillment blocked by the Yakuza, Sashimi Blade, Lizard Lady, and an army of female ninjas. Female? Well that's part of the trouble with girls.
Story ..... **Jacobs & Jones**
Art ..... **Tim Hamilton**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

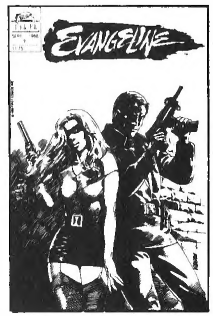
☐ **WILD NIGHTS #3**
Not to insult the *current* residents of New Jersey, but the Shattered Earth version just isn't the place to raise a non-vampiric family.
Story ..... **Even Dorkin**
Art ..... **Leonine & Penoelen**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

FIRST COMICS

☐ **THE BADGER #39**
A naughty ninja nips his nose, but the blindly brave Badger bites back.
Story ..... **Mike Baron**
Art ..... **Brian Murray**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 4/29]

☐ **DREADSTAR #38**
It's Vanth to the rescue when Willow is threatened by a gigantic killing machine.
Story ..... **Jim Starlin**
Art ..... **McDonnell & Meyerik**
[$1.75 color comic; bi-monthly; ships 5/6]

☐ **EVANGELINE #9**
Evangeline investigates illegal augenics.
Story ..... **Charlaa Dixon**
Art ..... **Stetema & Villegran**
[$1.75 color comic; bi-monthly ships 4/29]



☐ **GRIMJACK #50**
Cynosure is rockin' with death and destruction to celebrate Grimjack's 50th. Concludes the "Demon Wars" sage.
Story ..... **John Ostrander**
Art ..... **Tom Mendreke**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 5/6]

☐ **LONE WOLF AND CUB #13**
The Lone Wolf helps a skinny, bespectacled Amarican exchange student find his way through the treacherous subways of Tokyo.
Story ..... **Kazuo Koika**
Art ..... **Goseki Kojima**
Cover ..... **Bill Sienkiewicz**
[$2.50 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **NEXUS #48**
Nexus, Judah & Badger fight to free the one being who can stop the black hole. Part 4 of 6.
Story ..... **Mike Baron**
Art ..... **Steve Rude**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 4/29]

☐ **WHISPER #16**
Bein, Whisper, and a dead foe are back, for so many happy returns...
Story ..... **Steven Grent**
Art ..... **Spyder**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 5/6]

FISHWRAP PROD.

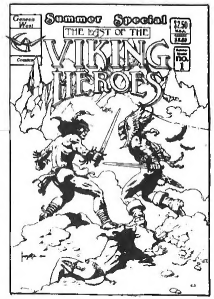
☐ **SAM AND MAX, SPECIAL ROAD TRIP EDITION**
Glann Vorhees and the Freelance Police pursue Sam & Max as they spread their message of peace, love, and general mayhem coast to coast.
Story/Art ..... **Stava Purcell**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

FRAGMENTS WEST

Phil Yah & Leigh Rubin present PATRICK RABBIT and a host of other fun, furry characters in:
FRANK THE UNICORN #7 & PENGUIN AND PENCILGUIN #5.
Retailing in May for the fair fare of $2.00.

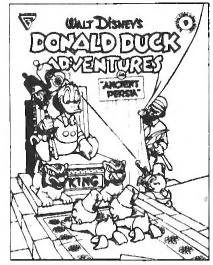
GENESIS WEST

☐ **LAST OF THE VIKING HEROES SUMMER SPECIAL #1**
The Vikings' attempt to invent a submarina sandwich are washed away by a tide of semantics. Plus, "Frank Frazetta and His Gallery of Art."
Story/Art ..... **Micheel Thibodeaux**
Cover ..... **Frank Frazette**
[$2.50 color comic; ships in May]



GLADSTONE

The best of Disney is available in May for the wonderful price of 95¢. Watch for:
DONALD DUCK #266
DONALD DUCK ADVENTURES #7
MICKEY & DONALD#5
MICKEY MOUSE#240
UNCLE SCROOGE #229
UNCLE SCROOGE ADVENTURES #7
WALT DISNEY'S COMICS & STORIES#532.
You'll also find the new **Disney Album** #9, *Donald Duck Adventures*, with Donald and the boys in "Ancient Persia" and "Supersnooper" for a paltry $5.95



HERO COMICS

☐ **CAPTAIN THUNDER AND BLUE BOLT #9**
"Middle Game"
The King's Gambit settles the age-old conflict of checkers vs. chess in part 2 of tha 3 part Blue Bolt/Sparkplug crossover.
Story ..... **Roy & Dann Thomee**
Art ..... **E.R. Cruz**
[$1.95 color comic; ships in May]

☐ **CHAMPIONS #10**
"New Gods For Old"
Dark Malice's plan to eliminate the Champions falls victim to a strike by UMDA, the United Munitions Dealers of America.
Story ..... **Mellonee & Merrinan**
Art ..... **Dell Barras**
[$1.95 color comic; ships in May]

☐ **ETERNITY SMITH #8**
Tesseract is back from a future in which she no longer exists. It's Eternity's fault, and he's *really* going to hear about it!
Story ..... **Dennis Mallonee**
Art ..... **Burgard & McClellan**
PLUS, "Indigo", part 1 of 5 to take you back to the streets of Tokyo, for a martial arts/occult adventure extravaganza by **Mellonee, Hoberg & Burgard.**
[$1.95 color comic; ships in May]

JABBERWOCKY GRAPHIX

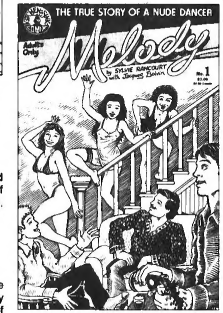
☐ **DIARIES OF NOLA #2**
16 pages of WOW! Extremely ADULT.
Story/Art ..... **John Howard**
[$1.50 black-and-white mini-comic; ships in May]

☐ **GOODIES #48**
The girls go for shore leave in the second installment of "Overly Busty Nekkid Amazon Space Bimbos", by **Brad Foster & Jim Thompson**. ADULT.
[75¢ black-and-white mini-comic; ships in May]

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

☐ **DEATH RATTLE #16**
Opportunity knocks but once, but Death rattles again and again when "Bulto", "Speedhawk, the Supermen Enemy of Crime" and "Annie" combine the talent of **Jaxon, Wolverton, Wilber & John Holland** in this often offbeat anthology.
Cover ..... **Robert Burgar**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ **KINGS IN DISGUISE #2**
Learn more about Sam, the "King of Spain", as Freddie's cross-country adventure continues in a boxcar bound for the midwest US of *A*.
Story ..... **Jamaa Vance**
Art ..... **Don Burr**
Cover ..... **Kurtzman & Popleski**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in May]



☐ **MELODY #1**

At last a dose of reality in comics! Follow the experiences of Melody, an exotic dancer who makes Omaha look like so much kitty litter. ADULT.
Story............Sylvie Rancourt
Art............Jacques Boivin
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; bi-monthly; ships in May]

☐ OMAHA, THE CAT DANCER #10
May is definitely the month of love for Omaha and Chuck (what month isn't?), but a surprise from Senator Bonner may mean trouble in paradise for the prettiest kitty of exotic comic fame.
Story............Kate Worley
Art............Reed Waller
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ SPIRIT #43
Reprints the classic "Dolan Walks a Beat", "The Spirit Now Deputy", "The Spirit vs. Blind Lamb" & "Hamid Jebru."
Story/Art/Cover........Will Eisner
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

☐ XENOZOIC TALES #6
The quarterly adventure series continues with high-flying fun with Remfro, Jack, Hannah, pteranadons & pteradactyls galore.
Story............Mark Schultz
Art............Stiles & Schultz
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

MAD DOG GRAPHICS

☐ EDDY CURRENT #8 (of 12)
Continues chapter two of Eddy's awkward evolution as a superhero.
Story/Art............Ted McKeever
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in May]

MARVEL COMICS

☐ ALPHA FLIGHT #62
The Purple Man returns from beyond the grave to check up on his Alpha daughter.
Story............Bill Mantlo
Art............Lee & Milgrom
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/12]

☐ AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #304
Peter parker publishes and tours with "Webs", a photojournal of his shots of Spider-Man. First stop, California.
Story............David Michelinie
Art............Todd McFarlane
[$1.00 color comic; bi-weekly; ships 5/12; newsstand o/s 6/4]

☐ AMAZING SPIDER MAN ANNUAL #22
The Evolutionary War continues with Spidey and guest-stars Daredevil & Speedball.
Story............Tom DeFalco
Art............Bagley
[$1.75 color comic; ships 5/12; newsstand o/s 6/4]

☐ BLACK PANTHER #3 (of 4)
The Black Panther gets up on the wrong side of the bed to save his kingdom from insurgency and a nuclear missile.
Story............Peter Gillis
Art............Cowen & DeLaRosa
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/5; newsstand o/s 5/28]

☐ CAPTAIN AMERICA #345
The Captain turns himself in to the Commission on charges of "assault with intent to sell comic books."
Story............Mark Gruenwald
Art............Dwyer & Milgrom
[75¢ color comic; ships 5/12; newsstand o/s 6/4]

☐ CONAN THE KING #48
Conan searches all of Aquilonia to find the man who starched his loin cloth.
Story............Don Kraar
Art............Docherty & Bator
[$1.50 color comic; bi-monthly; ships 5/5; newsstand o/s 5/28]

☐ DAREDEVIL #258
Karen helps hornhead crack a child pornography ring, while Typhoid makes the Kingpin blush red.
Story......Nocenti & Romita Jr.
Art............Al Williamson
Cover..Williamson & Romita Jr.
[75¢ color comic; ships 5/5; newsstand o/s 5/28]

☐ D.P. 7 #23
Special initial issue. DP7 defends Ft. Benning from infiltration by PSI Force. Plus new, improved killing techniques from the CIA.
Story............Mark Gruenwald
Art............Ryan & Bulandi
Cover............Paul Ryan
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/12]

☐ G.I. JOE #76
G.I. Joe gets snake-bitten while invading COBRA Island.
Story............Larry Hama
Art............Rogers & Fredericks
[$1.00 color comic; ships 5/5; newsstand o/s 5/28]

☐ G.I. JOE SPECIAL MISSIONS #13
Three Joes mine the harbors and fight government corruption in Ethiopia.
Story............Larry Hama
Art............Trimpe & Mushynsky
[$1.00 color comic; ships 5/5; newsstand o/s 5/28]

☐ MARVEL COMICS #1
The last word in bi-weekly comics is here! Now you can see your favorite heroes at least two times each month. Featuring: WOLVERINE--at his lethal best in Viet Nam, part 1 of 10--by....**Claremont, Buscema & Janson**
MASTER OF KUNG FU--with Shang Chi debating whether or not to return to civilization, part 1 of 8--by..**Moench, Grindberg & Cockrum**
MAN THING--in the midst of a government attempt to recreate the *Super Soldier Formula*, part 1 of 11,
by............**Gerber & Sutton**
SILVER SURFER--facing the frightful Fear Worm--by........**Al Milgrom**
Cover............Walt Simonson
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/5; newsstand o/s 5/28]

☐ NAM MAGAZINE #2
Reformats *The 'Nam* #3-4 in a black-and-white magazine.
Story............Doug Murray
Art............Michael Golden
[$1.95 black-and-white magazine; ships 5/5]

☐ THE NEW MUTANTS #67
Hercules appears to re-instill Magma's faith in the ancient Roman Gods.
Story............Chris Claremont
Art............Williams & Rubinstein
[$1.00 color comic; ships 5/12; newsstand o/s 6/4]

☐ NEW MUTANTS ANNUAL #4
The High Evolutionary rains on the New Mutants' parade when he decides to revoke one of their powers.
Story............Louise Simonson
Art............Brigman & McLeod
[$1.75 color comic; ships 5/5; newsstand o/s 5/28]

☐ POWER PACK TRADE PAPERBACK
Reprints *Power Pack* #1-4, the "classic" tale of how the Power children originally received their marvelous abilities.
Story............Louise Simonson
Art............Brigman & Wiecek
[$7.95 color trade paperback; ships 5/12]

☐ PSI-FORCE #23
PSI Force runs amok when they meet DP7 on their way into Fort Benning.
Story............Fabian Nicieza
Art............Witherby
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/5]

☐ SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #151
Conan raids England and a wizard sticks his sword in a stone.
Story............Chuck Dixon
Art............Kwapisz & Chan
Cover............Norem
[$2.00 black-and-white magazine; ships 5/12]

☐ S.H.I.E.L.D. #3 (of 6)
Tony Stark helps Nick Fury in his attempt to purge SHIELD of enemy infiltration.
Story............Bob Harras
Art............Neary & DeMulder
Cover............Mark Bright
[$3.50 color comic; bookshelf format; ships 5/5]

☐ SOLO AVENGERS #10
HAWKEYE fights a few noncostumed bad guys for a pleasant change of pace, by **DeFalco, Bright & Marzon**. And DR. DRUID faces noonhour nastiness in a New York subway station, by **Chichester, Clark & Weeks**.
Cover............Lee Weeks
[75¢ color comic; ships 5/12; newsstand o/s 6/4]

☐ SPIDER-MAN DIGEST #11
Reprints Spidey's conflict with the Kingpin from *Amazing Spider-Man* #83-85.
Story............Stan Lee
Art............Romita, Esposita Buscema & Mooney
[$1.50 color digest; ships 5/12; newsstand o/s 6/4]

☐ STRANGE TALES II #18
CLOAK AND DAGGER learn the difference between Night and Day in "Descent into Darkness." And DOCTOR STRANGE deals with the consequences of having been dead for a while.
Stories............Gillis & Austin
Art............Case, Emberlin Lewis & Wiacek
Cover............Kevin Nowlan
[75¢ color comic; ships 5/12; newsstand o/s 6/4]

☐ STRIKEFORCE: MORITURI #21
Introducing the newest Morituri, who was a soldier before his horrible, hordeable enslavement.
Story............James Hudnall
Art......H. Thomas & DeZuniga
Cover........Mignola & Nowlan
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/5; newsstand o/s 5/28]

☐ TALES OF G.I. JOE #9
For those too young to remember the violence of *G.I. Joe* #9.
Story............Grant
Art............Vosburg & Stone
[$1.50 color comic; ships 5/5; o/s newsstand 5/28]

☐ WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #42
Spider-Man stops holding back in his attempts to wrest Betty Leeds from the clutches of a religious cult.
Story............Peter David
Art............Saviuk & Williams
[$1.00 color comic; ships 5/5; newsstand o/s 5/28]

☐ WEST COAST AVENGERS #36
Henry Pym reclaims his good name when he saves the otherwise hapless West Avengers.
Story............Steve Englehart
Art............Milgrom & Machlan
[75¢ color comic; ships 5/5; newsstand o/s 5/28]

☐ WHAT THE-?! #2
No established character is safe, as the Marvel Bullpen continues to parody the names that made it great. With WOLVERINE, NICK FURY, DR. STRANGE, and the FANTASTICAL FOUR vs. SUPERB MAN. From: **Milgrom, Mignola, Williamson, Hembeck, Byrne, Ordway, Gillis, Foglio & J. Severin.**
Cover............John Byrne
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/5]

☐ WILLOW #1 (of 3)
Reprints the comic adaptation of the Lucasfilm fantasy/adventure *Willow*.
Story............Jo Duffy
Art............Hallwill, Tanghal & Jackson
[$1.00 color comic; ships 4/28; newsstand o/s 5/21]

☐ WOLFPACK #2
Wheels is given the chance to avenge his father's death, but the morality weighs heavily with the blood on his hands.
Story............Larry Hama
Art............Wilson & Baker
[75¢ color comic; ships 5/5; newsstand o/s 5/28]

☐ X-MEN #233
Part two of the Brood Trilogy. First *X-Men* on the new bi-weekly schedule.
Story............Chris Claremont
Art............Silvestri & Green
[$1.00 color comic; bi-weekly; ships 5/5; newsstand o/s 5/28]

MARVEL EPIC

☐ AKIRA #1
After World War III, what more could go wrong for humanity. Akira, the Mutant, that's what. Translated from the hit Japanese series by the same name.
Story............Katsuhiro Otomo
Americanization........Jo Duffy
[$3.50 color comic; bookshelf format; ships 5/12]

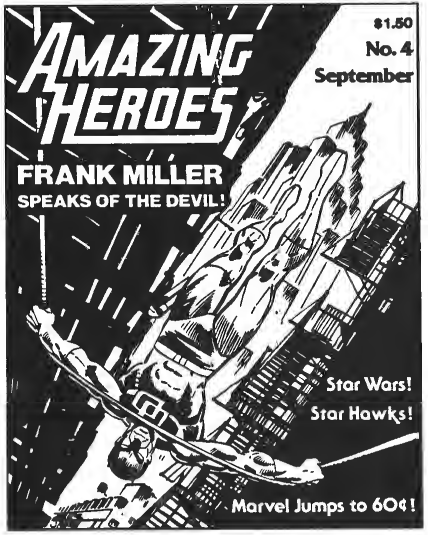
☐ GROO, THE WANDERER #43
Groo proves that he's not as slow-witted as most people think he is.
Story........Aragones & Evanier
Art............Sergio Aragones
[$1.00 color comic; ships 5/12]

☐ POWERLINE #2
Vic and Lenore make their first public appearance, while a villain plots to make it their last.
Story........Chichester & Clark
Art....Ross, Williamson & Muth
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/12]

☐ VIDEO JACK #5
Venture into the world of "My Mother The Car." Aw, it'll never wash!
Story............Cary Bates
Art........Giffen, Wiess & Hunt
[$1.25 color comic; ships 5/12]

MARVEL STAR

☐ ALF #7



BACK ISSUES!

THE BEST OF THE BEST!

COMICS HISTORY AS IT HAPPENED:
Miller! Moore! Chaykin! Perez!
COLLECT 'EM ALL

COMICS HISTORY AS IT HAPPENS:

AMAZING HEROES!

THE BEST – TWICE MONTHLY – SUBSCRIBE!

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Heathcliff goes monthly for your early-summer reading recreation.
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Art ..... **Kremer & Roettcher**
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"I Was a Dinosaur's Mother"
Paleontological fun with Heathcliff.
Story ..... **Angelo DeCesare**
Art ..... **Kremer & Roettcher**
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MIRAGE STUDIOS

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Turtles with a touch of class.
Story ..... **Jim Lawson**
Art ..... **Ryan Brown**
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NICOTAT COMICS

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"Captured by Professor Mulligan"
Boris battles the Bear-slayer, a machine that might send our hero off to eternal hibernation.
Story/Art ..... **Smith & Mattsson**
Cover ..... **Smith & Emberlin**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic, ships in May]

NOW COMICS

☐ **ORIGINAL ASTRO BOY #11**
He's flying high and fighting mad, so don't dare try to stop DARK ASTRO BOY!
Story ..... **Ken Steacy**
Art ..... **Andrew Pratt**
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He may have once been America's greatest secret weapon, but without his memory, Speed Racer's big brother is just another highly trained super spy at the hands of the most notoriously insane super criminals of our time. C'est la vie.
Story ..... **Fred Schiller**
Art ..... **Booker & McKenne**
[$3.50 color comic, ships in May]

☐ **RUST #12**
Scott Baker is *really* peeved now, and some underworld scum are going to find out why!
Story ..... **Fred Schiller**
Art ..... **Akina, Brozman & Aah**
[$1.75 color comic, ships in May]

☐ **SPEED RACER #12**
Speed fights samurai, ninjas & jetlag in Japan, as the Mach 5 really hits the pits.
Story ..... **Lamer Waldron**
Art ..... **Morgan, Thomaa & Aah**
Cover ..... **Ken Steacy**
[$1.75 color comic, ships in May]

ONWARD COMICS

☐ **ULTRA KLUTZ #22**
Avec "The Colliding" and "Lost in the Shuffle: Ichiro Takeshi."
Story/Art ..... **Jeff Nicholson**
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Follow the Pied Piper, as he plays a merry tune for May. There's an assortment of goodies (or baddies). Who really can say.
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"The Facts of Life"
Buster comes to grips with himself, while the Human Powerhouse tries to get home.
Story/Art ..... **Greg Theakston**
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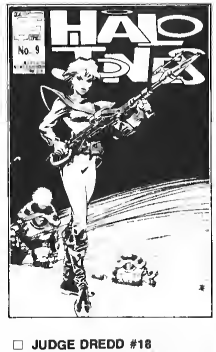
QUALITY COMICS

☐ **BALLAD OF HALO JONES #9**
A soldier's life doesn't agree with Halo, as life in the barracks is as rough as that on the battlefront. Also, more from Abelerd Snazz and the Robusters.
Story ..... **Moore & Millis**
Art ..... **Ian Gibson**
Cover ..... **Bret Blevins**
[$1.25 color comic, ships in May]



☐ **JUDGE DREDD #18**
Dredd must save some babies from the Judge gene pool, but he's going to need help. See the supreme team of Dredd & Machine on a venture into the Rad-Lands.
Story ..... **T.B. Grover**
Art ..... **Ron Smith**
Cover ..... **Jim Fern**
[$1.25 color comic, ships in May]

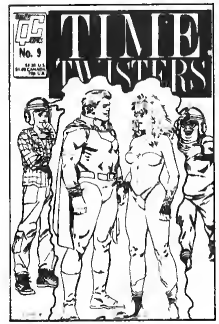
☐ **ROGUE TROOPER #18**
"You Only Die Twice" part two.
Is the new Gunnar really as good as he seems? Can Rogue Trooper reform the Souther armies to clear his good name? Does seven factor evenly into 371? Maybe!!
Story ..... **Gerry Finley-Day**
Art ..... **Cam Kennedy**
Cover ..... **Louis Williams**
[$1.25 color comic, ships in May]

☐ **SAM SLADE—ROBO-HUNTER #18**
More singing, more dancing, more robo-circuit-smashing, as the Human League cruises the Brit-Cit.
Story ..... **Grant & Grover**
Art ..... **Ian Gibson**
Cover ..... **Larson & DeLarosa**
[$1.25 color comic, ships in May]

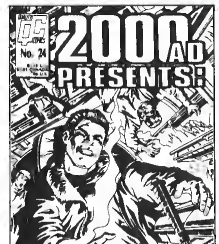
☐ **SCAVENGERS #4**
The dinosaurs get fed up with the Trans-Time expedition when the company feeds them a load of rotten bologna. Now it's *really* chow time!
Story ..... **R.E. Wright**
Art ..... **Sola**
Cover ..... **Sears & Pennington**
[$1.25 black-and-white comic, ships in May]

☐ **SLAINE THE BESERKER #11**
Learn the true nature of the universe with all the blood and gore you can stomach from Slaine.
Story ..... **Pat Mills**
Art ..... **David Pugh**
Cover ..... **Sears & Pennington**
[$1.25 color comic, ships in May]

☐ **STRONTIUM DOG #11**
"Outlaw!--the conclusion"
The Strontium Dogs finally band together to save Johnny Alpha from an otherwise certain doom.
Story ..... **Alan Grant**
Art ..... **Carlos Ezquerra**
Cover ..... **Jim Fern**
[$1.25 color-comic, ships in May]



☐ **TIME TWISTERS #9**
Take a trip to where it all goes together, the official world Time-Production Centre. Catch the latest from **Gosnell, Leach, Redondo & Moore**.
Cover ..... **Jim Fern**
[$1.25 color comic, ships in May]



☐ **2000 AD SHOWCASE #24**
The title has changed, but the "quality" remains in the continuing adventures of Dan Dare & The VC's.
Stories ..... **Tully & Finley-Day**
Art ..... **Gibbons & Richardson**
Cover ..... **Ron Randall**
[$1.25 color comic, ships in May]

QUEBEC COMICS

☐ **CANADIAN NINJA #2 (of 6)**
Bo's trip to England is anything but relaxing. It's intense! But then, the life of a ninja is always intense.
Story ..... **Rogers Beausoleil**
Art ..... **Lagace & Joly**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic, ships in May]

☐ **HERALDS OF CANADA #2**
The Heralds fight a cyborg super-team for parking space in the streets of downtown Montreal.
Story ..... **Pierre Charbenneau**
Art ..... **Real Courtemenche**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic, ships in May]

R.A.K. GRAPHICS

☐ **DRAGON OF THE VALKYR #1**
What can a hapless saurian expect after he survives the destruction of his trenadimensional merchant ship? Well there's always godhood.
Story ..... **Steve Simeheuser**
Art ..... **James Mravek**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic, ships in May]

RENEGADE PRESS

☐ **CASES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES #13**
"The Adventure of the Naval Treaty"
Part one of two for the London's greatest crime-busting detective.
Story ..... **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**
Art ..... **Day & Day**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic, ships in May]

☐ **FRENCH ICE #14**
When Carmen, a land developer, a bartender & the postal service get together, who knows who'll wind up on top. Although I hear that Carmen prefers that particular position.
Story/Art ..... **Lelong**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic, ships in May]

☐ **KILGORE #4**
"Kilgore by Nite"
Kilgore tears the city apart in his search for some diamonds he left "in a safe place."
Story/Art ..... **Brian Chin**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic, ships in May]

☐ **MECHTHINGS #5**
More vampire robots, law-n-order robots, and, of course, those heroic renegades, the Mechthings.
Story/Art ..... **Brad Foster**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic, ships in May]

☐ **MS. TREE #47**
Are you ready for "Murder Cruise, part three"? Me neither, but here it is. I hope.
Story ..... **Collins & Morise**
Art ..... **Beatty & Kato**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic, ships in May]

RIP OFF COMIX

☐ **UNDERGROUND CLASSICS #9**
"The Forty Year Old Hippie" returns, and this dude is really where it's at. Like, he knows what's happening. *Modern translation*: He's Rad!
Story/Art ..... **Ted Richard**
[$2.50 black-and-white comic, ships in April]

SLAVE LABOR

☐ **SAMURAI PENGUIN #7**
Lord Yoshi assumes the role until a new Samurai Penguin can somehow be found.
Story ..... **Dan Vado**
Art ..... **Folker & Saavedra**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic, ships in May]

TSR

☐ **DRAGONLANCE SAGA—BOOK TWO**
"Time of the Dragon"
Not to be confused with "Time of the Cute, Little Bunny Rabbit."
Story ..... **Roy Thomas**
Art ..... **Tom Yeates**
[$9.95 color comic, ships in May]

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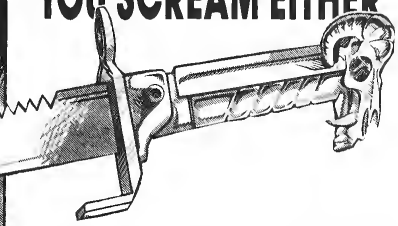


A Preview of the new *Aliens* comic from Dark Horse

by Andy Mangels

In 1979, Ridley Scott unleashed a different brand of terror on the movie screen with his science fiction/horror movie, *Alien*.

In 1986, director James Cameron followed the hugely successful movie with a sequel, *Aliens*.

In 1988, a year before the third *Alien* movie is scheduled to debut, Dark Horse Comics plans to release an *Aliens* comic book, one of the first original movie tie-ins (the first was Dark Horse's own *Godzilla! Special*) to appear from an independent comic company.

The first movie, *Alien*, took place at an unspecified time in the future. Most of the action was set on the space cargo ship *Nostromo*. Answering a signal from a planet (later revealed to be a warning signal, not a distress signal), one of the crew members is attacked by a parasitic "face-hugger"! The man is brought on board, and the alien, which has gestated an egg in his stomach, bursts out, grows at an astonishing rate, and proceeds to slaughter almost the entire crew. The only survivor, Ripley, escapes in suspended animation, heading towards Earth.

In the second movie, *Aliens*, Ripley is revived, to find herself 57 years in the future! A space colony has already settled on the planet where her crew found the alien parasites. She is assured that the settlers have not encountered anything odd. Weeks later, Ripley is asked to accompany a group of Space Marines on a mission to the planet. All communication has been cut off. Returning to the planet, Ripley barely escapes, with a young girl named Newt, who is the only surviving settler, and Hicks, the last of the Space Marines. The planet is nuked. The cast heads home.

Dark Horse's six-issue comic series, *Aliens*, picks up 12 years after the ending of *Aliens*. Writer Mark Verheiden (also the author of their *American* series) plans the return of several familiar characters, some of them quite surprising by their inclusion. "Newt is now about seventeen years old," says Verheiden. "She's back on Earth, severely traumatized by her encounters with the aliens. Ever since she returned to Earth she's been locked away in a mental institution/orphanage where doctors are trying to cure her with drug therapy and other things. It's not working very well though."

Hicks is going through his own traumas. At the end of the second movie he is hit in the face with a gob of acidic alien blood, which places him under suspicion.

"He finds himself shunned by his peers, because they've heard that when you come in contact with the aliens they grow inside of you and burst out. They're all concerned that this guy's a walking alien-carrier—that one's gestating inside him. The doctors all know that he's not a risk, but that doesn't matter to most of his peers. Hicks is strained by all the pressure, as he has no friends. Nobody wants to hang around with the guy who might be an alien!"

Although several references will be made to Ripley, she will not be seen in the comic book. Verheiden offers, "The main reason why is—as far as I know—we could not use Sigourney Weaver's face without having to go through some massive contractual thing," says Verheiden. "We are able to use the other people's faces, but Sigourney was a problem. Rather than trying to work around that, we just wrote her out of the story."

"It's not like Ripley never existed though. She's not dead, but she's left the solar system after the second *Aliens* movie. She's in touch with Newt, but she couldn't handle being on Earth so she had to leave. There may be elements that she was chased away as well," adds Verheiden cryptically.

The Story

As the comic series opens, a derelict spaceship has floated into Earthspace, and is immediately intercepted by the Coast Guard.

"There are a lot of derelict ships, so it's a pretty run-of-the-mill operation to restrain the ship and keep it from crashing into Earth," says Verheiden. "Except on this ship, there's an alien on board! It makes a big mess. It's already loose on the derelict ship, then it gets onto the Coast Guard ship and slaughters most of the crew. Both ships are blown up, and almost everything destroyed."

Tapes of the attack are saved, which make some very interesting viewing for a man called Dr. Orona, a military biological weapons expert. Using the data that came from the derelict ship before it was destroyed, he is able to plot the telemetry back to the alien homeworld. "Needless to say, he's very interested in getting a ship back to the alien homeworld. He wants to find out how they live and function ... and also try to get one back to Earth. He thinks the aliens would make a neat weapon against whomever his superiors want to use them."

"Hicks is the perfect person for this mission, since he's harboring, what I guess could very loosely be called 'a grudge.' He is picked to lead the mission back to the alien planet.

"Although Orona is interested in specimens, Hicks just wants to go back and blow the hell out of the place. He's not too interested in specimens—it's kind of his secret mission."

Hicks tells Newt that he's going on this mission, prompting her to ask him if she can come along.

"She's still bothered and obsessed by her encounters with the aliens, and if she doesn't get out of the mental institution, she'll probably be lobotomized with drugs. Hicks is a pretty hard guy after his years as a pariah, but he does come around and breaks her out of the institution. He smuggles her aboard the ship, and another crew of hard, tough, Marines go blasting off into space on a course for the alien homeworld."

A plotline introduced late in the first issue concerns a TV evangelist on Earth, named Salvaje. Salvaje has taken to the airwaves with his vision of salvation. In this future world, the FCC no longer regulates broadcasting, and there are over 5,000 channels. "All of the channels are taken up by TV evangelists of one kind or another, who go to extreme lengths to try to capture their viewers. Salvaje is the minister—and probably sole component—of the Church of the Immaculate Incubation. This Orders' messiah pretty much resembles a big alien. Salvaje is worshipping and looking for an alien. He thinks it's basically God."

Another subplot reveals that the corporations of Earth are basically at odds with the government, to the point where they spy on each other and sell each other's secrets. "The Corporation isn't too pleased to learn that the military is sending off Hicks and the Marines to find the ultimate killing machine. They figure that's something they should get their hands on because there's a lot of money to be made by propagating this sort of thing. So naturally, they organize their own mission of cutthroats who are following Hicks and the Marines to the alien homeworld."

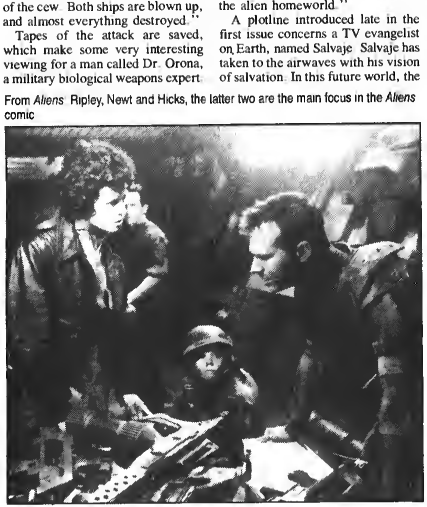
Verheiden notes that all of the previous plot elements are set up in the first two issues, while later issues contain several startling surprises. What happens when and if the aliens get to Earth? What happens to Hicks and the Marines on the alien homeworld, not to mention "The Corporation's" cutthroats? How does Salvaje and his Church of Immaculate Incubation figure into everything? Even if Hicks and his crew manage to escape the alien homeworld, will they survive the trip home? Just who or what is the surprising character who returns from the first *Alien* movie (probably the very last character you'd expect)? And what role does Newt play in the whole proceedings?

About the only thing Verheiden would reveal about the ending of the series is that the aliens will survive.

"I don't think 20th Century Fox would be too happy if I killed off all of their characters, and Dark Horse probably wouldn't be too happy either. If this series is successful, there has been talk of doing another one, so I'm certainly not going to kill the lead characters off.

"They're scavengers. They survive and live on hundreds of other worlds. Even if one planet is cleansed of them, they'll still be out there, waiting and hungry."

From *Aliens*: Ripley, Newt and Hicks, the latter two are the main focus in the *Aliens* comic



An Alien is an Alien is an Alien

In both movies, the aliens seem to be nothing but mindless killing machines. Do they think?

"I consider that they're basically like a hive of bees," says Verheiden. "There's a Queen, who is basically the intelligence behind all of the drones. The adults we saw in both movies were drones to this Queen. In my story, there will be some revelations about how the Queen communicates with her drones. I'm playing with the idea that some of what the Queen is sending out to her drones is drifting over into the humans as well. The humans are starting to pick up the alien vibes, without knowing really what they are. That's why Salvaje starts getting visions of God as an alien, he's picking up these signals and vibes from the alien homeworld.

"I don't see the aliens as being all that bright, even the Queen. They're just scavenger animals. They eat up one prey, and when it's gone, they move on to another one. The aliens are just going from world to world doing that. They don't have any premeditated plan or plot behind their actions. They just end up where they end up.

"In this case, the humans are bringing the aliens upon themselves by voluntarily going into their territory. There's sort of a message in here about humanity bringing trouble upon itself on a regular basis."

A breakdown of the alien physiology is fairly easy, given the parameters in the two movies. The "facehugger" first expels itself from the eggs layed by a Queen. The facehugger then attaches and incubates inside its host, metamorphosing into a different lifeform. The facehugger is then shed like an old skin, and the incubating tot stays inside the host until it is independent. At this time (12-24 hours), it bursts out of its host and continues to grow until it reaches an adult drone size. The whole process can take as little as 24-48 hours, or the gestating baby can stay inside a host for weeks. Although it has been traditionally thought that only the Queen could lay eggs, and that only an egg could incubate inside a host, Verheiden may reveal whether or not an adult drone can also incubate inside a human body.

On Writing Aliens

Aliens writer Mark Verheiden is a new name to most comic readers. His first comic strip ever written was Dark Horse's *The American* #1, a book he continues writing to this day. Verheiden has been getting offers from other companies ever since, and has picked up the scripting of the origin of the Martian Manhunter for an upcoming *Secret Origins* at DC. Verheiden has also had several of his film scripts optioned, although only one has been made. "It's called *Terror Squad*, and it's not my proudest moment. It was totally rewritten from my script, and I haven't even seen it. It will be out on tape at the end of March. Nice poster though. I got my name on it."

Mark A. Nelson's pencil roughs from *Aliens* #1, the classic stomach exploders return.

In discussing how he writes, Verheiden admits, "I work out a fairly loose plot first. It's kind of a free-form method. I find that the best ideas usually come from sitting down and putting scene One with scene Two and scene Three. The details come out when I make the connections between scenes. I would find it incredibly confining to have a tightly detailed plot, because so many of the ideas—the interesting and bizarre off-the-wall stuff—comes from keeping things loose and exploring different routes to use in reaching the next scene. I really try to pull back and not force myself into a direction that might be limiting or hold me back later.

"I know, from working on film, that the worst thing you can do is to put down so many parameters that there's no direction a writer can go other than a preset, prefab way. That eliminates all the creative elements that make things interesting. I've worked with producers who say 'No, no. A to B to C to D.' Every time they say one of those things and give you a limitation, they're taking away something really interesting. You may have been able to go off in a way that would have excited them, but they're saying 'Nope. I don't want to be interested. I don't want to be excited. I want you to do what I want you to do.' That's extremely limiting.

"Dark Horse is very good about not beating my brains out in demanding totally detailed outlines. Obviously I had to give them a story outline, but as far as the writing goes, a lot of details will be plugged in as I continue to write the series."

Verheiden finds that working with both Dark Horse and 20th Century Fox is easier than one might expect.

"Fox was impressed by the books Dark Horse was putting out, and I think that's one of the reasons they decided to go with us on the book rather than one of the majors. Other than the restriction about the use of Ripley, the only thing they asked us to do was to come up with something interesting. Mike (Richardson), Randy (Stradley), and myself got together. We all had some ideas for the story, and we knocked around some very vague and general plot concepts. I wrote the outline from there, it went to Fox, and the next thing I heard was that they loved it! I don't mean to make it sound easy, because that was from July to December of last year, so we had about six months of messing around with it."

How does *Aliens* the comic fit into the *Aliens* movie framework? "I have no idea," laughs Verheiden! "The reason I have no idea is that they don't have a script for *Alien III* yet. William Gibson is rumored to be working on it, and Ridley Scott is supposed to direct it. At the time we started the project, they weren't sure there was even going to be another one. We decided that our story is our story, and it's independent of anything they do. If they come up with a storyline two years from now that completely negates what we've done, that's okay. We're telling a different story. I can't be held back, chomping my fingernails off, wondering if they're going to do a story where Newt gets killed or Hicks is turned into an alien or something. I can't worry about that stuff. I just have to do my story. It's going to be a while before *Alien III* is out anyhow."

Writer Mark Verheiden will reveal answers about the aliens. Above: again from *Aliens*.

Verheiden promises that *Aliens* is going to be a dark book. "I lean towards a sort of cynical form of writing, and *Aliens* is definintely going in that direction. I don't see the world as getting a whole lot better in the next few centuries. This isn't to say that it's no fun at all, or that everything's horrible, but this vision is not an especially pleasant vision. It's going to be pretty dark.

"What I'm hoping to get is a general feel of creepiness, and I think Mark A. Nelson's art can carry this off. I'm hoping to give him things to draw that are extremely creepy, and extremely disconcerting. Certainly when you start seeing the aliens doing bad things to the human beings, it will hopefully get pretty hair-raising and frightening. I don't know of any antecedents in comics that I could compare it to, because I don't read many comics. It will basically be a cross between the high action of the second film and the moodier moments of the first film. I think Ridley Scott's direction had that moody, creepy, dripping water-type of feeling, whereas the second film was kind of a balls-out action, 'let's go boys! Let's wipe 'em out.' I think comics can do both. I think comics can really get into people's heads, which is something movies can't do, even in a creepy way. This is one reason the characters of Newt and Hicks are going to be more important and really built up in this one. They won't be surface-level at all. Hopefully you'll see them both triumph, it won't be a complete downer for them."

"We're calling this science fiction/horror, because both elements are fairly strong. With the TV evangelist, we're also getting into a little social satire. I don't mean satire as in 'ha ha, funny.' We're taking a jibe at them by extrapolating things as they are now, and making them more absurd as time goes on."

Buying Aliens

Publisher Mike Richardson has had an eventful two years since he began Dark Horse Comics with Randy Stradley as his editor and co-conspirator. His philosphy has been to publish comics that were good solid stories with artwork to match. He also only published the material that he liked, rather than pandering to the collective taste. His attitudes have brought him to presiding over a very well-received and popular comic company that has pleased both the fan, and the critical community.

One of those comics he wanted to do was *Aliens*. "I just thought it would be a hot book," says Richardson from his Portland, Oregon office. "When we were talking about doing it, it occurred to me that people said that movie books didn't do well. For the most part, they were never handled well! We approached this as an exciting, fresh story with lots of energy, and we wantd to get an artist whose 'look' was just right. We thought that if that happened, we could get a lot of interest. *Aliens* has an edge to it that I think will make it a great comic."

Richardson called 20th Century Fox's licensing department, and found them initially resistant to the idea of an *Aliens* comic. "We discussed it for a long time, especially with the *Aliens* movie being red-hot at the time. We waited for a while. They kept sitting on the fence, not answering one way or the other. I had Mark A. Nelson draw up some samples and we sent them in. Whether through coincidence or they liked the drawings, the next time we heard them, they said 'Rock'n Roll!' That's how it went."

Richardson also concedes that working with Fox is fairly easy, especially when one recalls that all concerned are professionals and are working with a highly lucrative project. "They're very nice people. They have some concerns, as it is a valuable property. Their main concern is that the property stay valuable. They don't want some flake coming in and messing it up for them. They've been extremely helpful and cooperative."

Some cross-promotion may be on line from Fox, if negotiations and legal matters can be cleared up. "We've got some ideas, but they have to work out all the legal ends of things. We don't know yet where that's going to go. Right now, we're just concentrating on the comic." Some distribution in video shops has been discussed, a market which would be almost completely untapped. "For this market, it is very important that the book be a good, solid selling item. If the book holds no interest for the video buyer and the retailer doesn't sell them, then that will be the end of that market. We think that titles like *Aliens* and *Godzilla* would be perfect for this." Plans are already under way to collect the entire six-issue mini-series into a trade paperback volume when it's completed, although the format is still up in the air. A mass-market edition is not out of the question either, but Richardson reiterates that none of that will take place until next spring after the series has concluded.

Richardson is very happy with the creative team on the project. "Mark Verheiden is one of the best writers in the field right now, as I think anyone who has read his *American* work can attest. He's been getting a lot of offers since he started working for us. He's a special talent.

"After seeing Mark A. Nelson's *Silverwing* work and his *Godzilla* page, I knew he was the right artist for *Aliens*. He has a flair to his drawing style that's perfect for this book. It's perfect for a black-and-white book as well. We're excited about him here at Dark Horse.

"A lot of our artists and writers are not very well known when they come in, but after they start doing some of their work for us, the offers begin rolling in. Both Mark Verheiden and Mark A. Nelson have been getting a lot of offers lately on other projects, very similar to what happened to Paul Chadwick (of *Concrete* fame) when he came to work for us. When he got the chance to show what he could do—although originally no one wanted to give him that chance—now everybody would like him to do everything!"

Drawing the Alien

Following in the footsteps of H.R. Giger (who designed the alien and the first movie's sets) and Walt Simonson (who adapted *Alien* in *Heavy Metal*) Mark A. Nelson is an artist who's been around for quite a while, yet one who is finally starting to get his due credit.

Nelson's list of credits is long and impressive. He's done (in comics): "Clonezone and *Starslayer* for First, *Airboy* and "Skywolf" at Eclipse, *Silverwing* for Now Comics, and "Dinosaur Tales" for Just Imagine and Dark Horse. In addition, Nelson has done mini-comics for Tonka Toy's *RockLords* and *Steel Monsters* toy lines, quite a bit of work for TSR games, and just recently illustrated a premium book on King Arthur for World Book Encyclopedias. Nelson teaches art at Northern Illinois University, and works in comics during the rest of his time!

The reaction from co-workers to Nelson's *Aliens* art has been nothing but positive. "I think Mark's stuff is fantastic," says Verheiden. "It's some of the neatest black-and-white work I've seen of any artist currently working. His duo-tone stuff is just fantastic. As far as working with him, we had a chat last year about the design and look of the book, and that's basically been it. I write full script, so I haven't had much interaction with him. I have this opinion that the writer is hired to write the book. I'm not going to pick up an eraser and go at an artist's work, so at the same time, I expect them to work from my full scripts. That's not to negate collaboration, because that's a wonderful thing when it works, but I like to have the story be mine. I work with Mark like I work in film, that is, I don't give camera angles unless it's essential, so I don't break the page down for my artists either. If I were an artist I'd find that insulting. Besides, if an artist is good, he should be able to surprise me with how something looks. Chris Warner on *The American* does that all of the time."

How did Nelson get involved with *Aliens*? "I guess I have to thank Mike Baron for that," says Nelson. "He did a spoof of *Godzilla* in 'Clonezone,' which I drew. The Dark Horse people saw that spoof and called me up, asking if I wanted to do a *Godzilla* pin-up page. I think up until that point, most people thought all I did was funny, humorous stuff. So I did that pin-up, which became the back cover to their *Godzilla! Special*. After that, Dark Horse asked me if I would be interested in doing the *Godzilla!* book (more on this in the accompanying article), which I was glad to do.

"Then they got 20th Century Fox interested and called me up again, saying, 'We've got this *Aliens* thing, would you do some samples?' I did a bunch of samples, they sent them in, and called me back later asking if I wanted to do *Aliens*. Of course, I said YES! Like 'What do you mean? Do something this great—something I'd really love to do? Forget it!' I really was enthused about it. That's kind of how I got *Aliens* in a nutshell. Or an eggshell.

It was Mark A. Nelson's "Godzilla" spoof and pin-up that got him the *Aliens* job.

"This is a black-and-white book," continues Nelson, "which I love to work in. I work a lot on a duo-tone board, which gives me a lot of textures. For me to do *Aliens*, which is really a contemporary science fiction film noir type story, I can use all of that textural emphasis. It's right up my alley. I'm pushing a lot of mood, and Mark is writing a lot of mood. There's some nightmarish stuff in the beginning, where Newt is in a power station, and it's a lot of fun to deal with all of the shadows and hidden malevolence. Then there's the firefights and battle scenes. Just lots of textual stuff. Hilary Barta at First Comics nicknamed me 'E.T.' for Extra Texture, because when I inked him, I'd add in extra layers on top of everything he already had in there."

Nelson is working from the *Alien* photo-novel and several posterbooks from both America and Japan. "These help me with the aliens, but in our story, since it's all-new settings, I don't have to rely on reference too much. Even with the aliens, if you look at them in the two

Armed to the teeth, but the aliens have more teeth. More of Mark A. Nelson's pencils from the first issue. Dark, wet, and moody.

movies, they change from movie to movie. They're not all the same. People can't say (said in a snotty fanboy voice) 'You know, you left one thumb off here.' Like anything else, all fish don't look alike, even if they're the same species. There are differences among everything in every species, and the aliens are no exception. I'm taking a little leeway, but I am sticking fairly close to the movie designs. I've seen both movies numerous times, so that helps."

Nelson is fairly free with the facial designs of the characters as well. "Since Hicks was scarred up at the end of *Aliens*, his face is not quite the same. It's actually fairly tough to draw him. Newt is 12 years older, so she does look different, although you should be able to tell she's the same person. I'm using a live model for the adult Newt, so that she will be very well expressed."

How Do You Label an Alien?

You don't if you're Dark Horse.

"I have no intention of labelling our books," says Mike Richardson adamantly. "Why would we? The name *Aliens* implies enough in this case. People know what the movies are, and if this is a comic book version tying in to the movie, I find it hard to believe that somebody would pick up the comic expecting cartoon characters playing in happy land!"

"I would like to think that the entire Dark Horse line is for all ages, but we don't pander to anybody. We like to put out intelligent material that a discriminating buyer would enjoy reading. We try different things, and don't underestimate anyone's intelligence. That's not bragging, and we're not making that our motto, it's just how we try to operate. We try to put out stuff that we would like to read. With the kind of reader we have, I don't think we need a 'Mature Reader' label, and usually, I don't think we ever have anything that we would need to put one on a book for anyhow."

Writer Verheiden says that he doesn't feel he's writing anything worthy of a label. "I'm not putting in any nasty four-letter words, or any graphic sex. There's not going to be anything in here that I feel can warp younger readers' minds. Certainly later on there'll be some nasty violence, but I'm trying to not have guts-flying-all-over-the-place-type violence. Again we're going for that creepy, there's-something-moving-back-there feeling. We're trying to give the reader a jolt with the violence, but in an artful way rather than a graphic way. I think if we labelled *Aliens*, it would cut off a major audience which would really enjoy the book."

Future Aliens

While both Dark Horse and 20th Century Fox await reaction to *Aliens*, Verheiden has left many bases open for a comic sequel.

Initial orders on the book are higher than expected, as well. "We've only got two of our smaller orders in at this time," admits Mike Richardson, "but they're larger than anything they've ever ordered from us before. We're really excited about that, and hope that holds true for all of the other orders that come in. Most of the retailers we've talked to have said they're ordering high on it. I haven't seen these kind of numbers since the boom of the black-and-white market."

Aliens promises a lot. But will it deliver? "*Aliens* should sell itself," says Richardson. "Once people see it, they'll find it's a good, strong product. The art and story are both very strong."

Aliens begins in April, with six bi-monthly issues ready to burrow their way into your hearts and minds. Any readers caught with a copy hugging their face will be killed instantly though. Don't want the damned things breeding now do we? ●

The Unseen Godzilla

Doing the Japanese Version of the Big Lizard's Latest Movie

by Andy Mangels

Premiering in April—the same month as the first issue of *Aliens*—is Dark Horse's third movie tie-in—except that this one is an actual movie adaptation!

It is a six-issue monthly *Godzilla* mini-series that will adapt the Japanese version of the film, *Godzilla 1985*, which was substantially different from the American version.

The road to this adaptation has been paved with lots of pitfalls, starting with Dark Horse's original plans for a new *Godzilla* series.

Announced last year, Dark Horse had planned to bring out an entirely new *Godzilla* comic, but for various reasons, that never came to pass. "Originally we had planned to do the *Godzilla! Special*," says publisher Mike Richardson, "which reintroduced the comic public to the way we would do Godzilla. Our version is very different from the way he's been done in comics in the past. Randy Stradley and I are both big fans of Godzilla, so we had talked for a while about doing a *Godzilla* book. After we had enough publishing experience under our belts, we secured the rights from Toho and put out the first *Special*, with the idea that within a few months we would begin the regular *Godzilla* series."

Putting out that first *Special* was quite a chore. Problems with the creative team on the *Special* delayed the project for almost three months, then when it finally was published (during the week of the 1987 San Diego Comic Con) the cover printing plates were mixed up. Consequently, about 100 copies of *Godzilla! Special* #1 were given out at the Comic Con with no black ink on them, in a sense making these copies a very limited edition collector's item. The covers were quickly reprinted, and the book finally shipped. "Needless to say," says Richardson, "with all of the delays, our regular series got put on hold."

The reviews and sales on *Godzilla! Special* were both very strong. Yet, some fans still ask Dark Horse when the book will be coming out! This prompted Richardson to resolicit the *Special* for reorders in March, one month before the new series premieres. "These will be first printings, because we overprinted on the initial orders. We had initially planned on going newsstand with it, but decided not to later. The first printings will be something nice for the fans who care about that kind of thing."

New Hope

"We were aware of the Japanese adaptation of the *Godzilla 1985* movie," says Richardson, "and when we started looking at serializing it, it just made sense to make this our next *Godzilla* project. We secured the rights to that, and we're using this adaptation as the first six issues of our new *Godzilla* book.

"We'll continue after issue #6, with new stories—at least that's the plan right now. We don't want to get ahead of ourselves, but this should do really well. Initial orders are very strong. The book is a very good book, so everyone should be happy."

Richardson again stresses that this is a Japanese adaptation of the Japanese version of *Godzilla 1985*, which bears little resemblance to the American version.

"In the Japanese version," he explains, "the story is much more serious and much darker. I don't think that anyone will feel like they've seen this before, just because the've seen the American version of the movie. We've rewritten the dialogue so that it stays consistent with the spirit of the Japanese book. It's a good read. It will be a very entertaining book."

The storyline for the series picks up 30 years after Godzilla supposedly died, but like all monsters, you just can't keep him down. He renews his attack on civilization, beginning with Tokyo. "He's like a salmon returning to its spawning grounds," laughs editor/scripter Randy Stradley. Of course, the military tries everything they can to stop him, but it becomes quickly apparently (at least to the U.S. and Russia) that the only thing that can stop him is nuclear weapons!

"Of course, the Japanese are reluctant to have nuclear weapons used on Japan," continues Stradley, "so they're trying to use their secret weapon, a super-fighter aircraft, against the rampaging monster."

After Godzilla trashes the plane, the Russians decide to use their hidden

The original manga adaptation of *Godzilla 1985*—better than the movie by far—by artist Kazuhisa Iwata. When it's over. The End?

orbiting nuclear weapons on Godzilla. As they launch a missile at Godzilla and Tokyo, the Americans find they must shoot down the missile before it can destroy Japan!

Can nothing stop Godzilla? Will Japan be destroyed? And just what are the repercussions of having a miles-high monster stomping through your city?

Covering Godzilla

Although covers for the mini-series were initially planned to be drawn by Art Adams, other commitments prevented him from working on the series at this time. So, Dark Horse went to their second choice: Mark Nelson!

Mark Nelson is now drawing all six covers to the adaptation of *Godzilla*, something he enjoys doing very much. "I'm a dinosaur fan, and doing *Godzilla* is great! The first movie made a huge impression on me as a kid, as did some of the later ones. I saw some of them recently, and thought, 'Boy this is really bad.' And corny too.' Those memories you have as a kid are that it's so great, then you resee it and it isn't as good. But you're not seeing it through a kid's eyes anymore. I do think the first *Godzilla* movie still stands the test of time very well. With my love for the movies, doing covers for the comic was total fun."

The Godzilla Portfolio

Dark Horse had initially commissioned dozens of pin-ups from the comic art community, for use as pin-ups in the regular series. Since the mini-series will be a complete 32 pages of story each issue, Dark Horse is left with several fantastic pieces of art waiting in their office to see print, somehow, somewhere.

Enter the upcoming *Godzilla Portfolio*.

"We talked to the distributors, and they said that since there's not many portfolios out on the market right now—that it would be a good, workable idea," says Richardson. "So we're doing it." The *Portfolio* will be ten plates, printed 11x27 in a slipcover. Richardson has not decided which art pieces will go in, as the list of contributors read like a Who's Who of comic artists:

Alan Moore, Steve Bissette, Art Adams, Mark A. Nelson, Eastman and Laird, Keith Giffen, Michael T. Gilbert, Charles Vess, Paul Chadwick, Hilary Barta, and many others.

"If this portfolio sells well, we do plan to do others. We have at least 30 plates at this point by the top names in comics. We'll see how this one goes, but all of these should be seen. We'll work them in somewhere."

The ten plate portfolio will ship in early June, costing $9.95.

The Future

The *Godzilla* book is Dark Horse's first experiment with adapting Japanese Manga, the newest craze to hit the comic world.

This won't be the last though, as Dark Horse is finalizing contracts for another Manga series from Japan.

As to other projects? "We have a couple of big projects and really commerical properties we're working on, but we'll announce those as the year goes on. We like to make announcements as time goes by, so we can keep excitement high. We want people beating down our doors," Richardson laughs, 'begging us for more." ●

It began with a hero who didn't exist.

Suddenly the powers were real.
Then frightening.
And then out of control.

Now the project is tearing apart
the nation it was supposed to save.

This is how it ends.

Captain Confederacy:
The Final Report on Project Hero

Captain Confederacy #9 - #12.
Script by **Will Shetterly** and **John M. Ford.**
Art by **Vince Stone.**

◆ *SteelDragon Press* ◆
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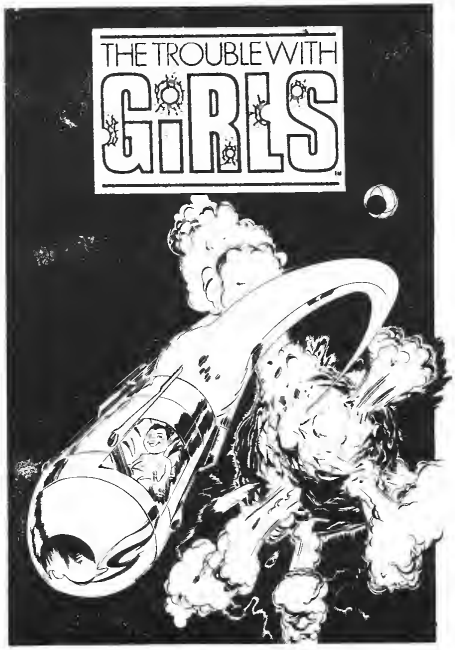
FIRSTLOOK

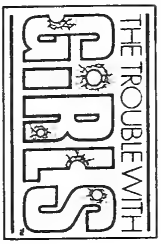
Eternity Comics' *The Trouble with Girls* has been attracting a bit of attention lately: A rave review in *The San Francisco Chronicle,* a couple of mentions on TV, serialization in the weekly newspaper *New York Kulture,* and a growing body of prominent fans. Now Godmother Filmworks, who produced the critically-acclaimed *Tell Me a Riddle* a few years back, is developing *Girls* for the screen.

The creators and writers, Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones, may be known to you as the authors of *The Beaver Papers, The Comic Book Heroes,* and tons of pieces for *National Lampoon* and other magazines—one of them even with these hallowed pages. Then again, they may not. The artist, Tim Hamilton, isn't known to very many people yet, but his star is rising as favorable reviews in the fan press proliferate.

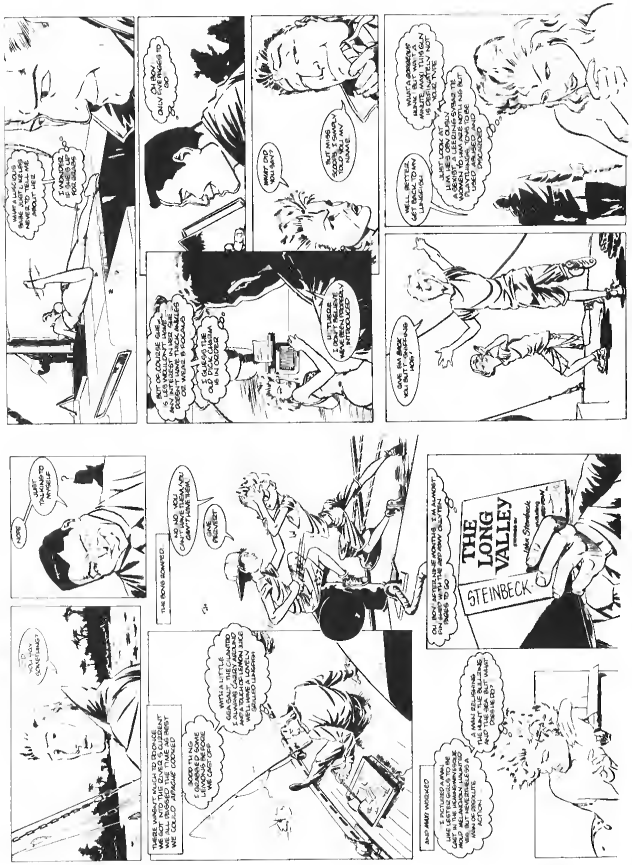
The hero of the book, Lester Girls, dreams of the perfect life: A quiet bookkeeping job, a mousey wife, a bungalow in the suburbs, and a comfy cardigan. But what is he stuck with? Nothing but a ceaseless round of luscious babes, high adventure, uncountable riches, and break-neck action. The cause of his curse is a mystery even to him, a mystery which we must solve if he ever hopes to be happy.

In the last issue, Lester's quest led him, along with his blood-brother Apache Dick and boy sidekicks Willy and Jerry Foster, to a lost Mayan city in the Yucatan. There they rescued spunky reporter Maxi Scoops from a sacrificial altar, before making their escape on a craft built by Apache. . .





THE TROUBLE WITH GIRLS



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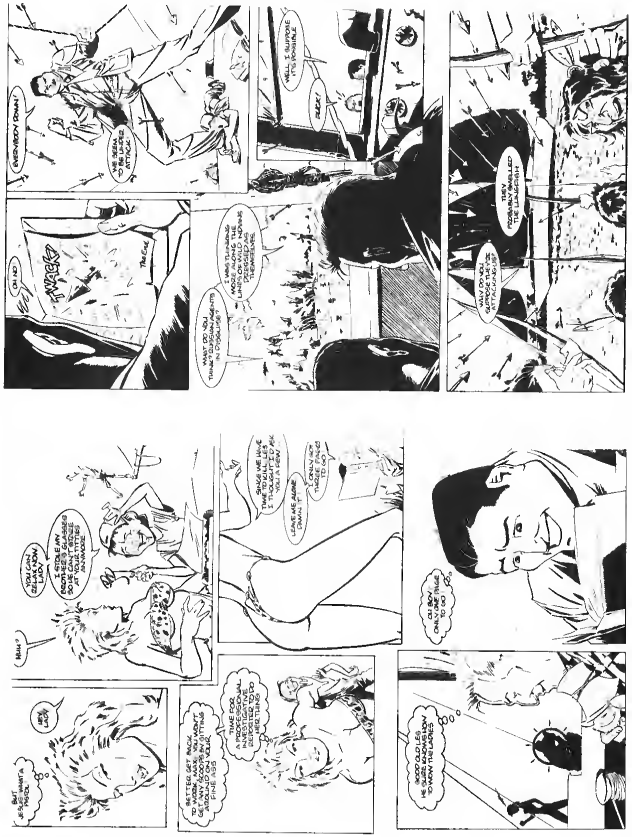
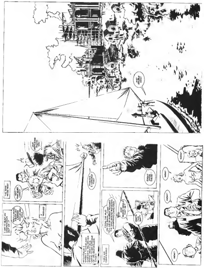


THE TROUBLE WITH GIRLS

THE TROUBLE WITH GIRLS

. . .continued in *Trouble with Girls #9*, on the stands now!



We're Off To Draw A Wizard

ERIC SHANOWER interviewed by SHEL DORF

This is Shel Dorf reporting for Amazing Heroes. *Those of you familiar with First Publishing's Oz books are familiar with the name Eric Shanower. Eric won the 1987 San Diego Comic-Con's "Russ Manning's Promising Newcomer Award." For a man in his early twenties he's well along the way to success.*

AH: *How long have you been a fan of Frank L. Baum's* Oz *books?*

SHANOWER: Since I was six years old, about 1970. I guess that's almost eighteen years.

AH: *Was this part of a home or school reading project?*

SHANOWER: Well, my parents read me the first couple, as I was only in first grade, just learning how to read, but after that I read them all myself.

AH: *Did the original illustrations sort of grab you too?*

SHANOWER: Yes, John R. Neill the illustrator is my biggest influence.

AH: *It's obvious that you feel a sense of authenticity in carrying on the Oz books. It's a wonderful style you're working in. How long does it take you to complete one of the books? Especially since, I noticed, you also write them.*

SHANOWER: It takes me an average of eight months. The first one took me about ten months, and the second one took me about six months, and the third one took me about eight months.

AH: *What's your approach?*

SHANOWER: First I write the plot outline and send it to Rick Oliver, the editor. He discusses it with me, and usually there are a few changes. Then I write the whole script out. Usually there are changes to that, too. Then I do the layouts, pencils, inks and color. Then it goes to press.

AH: *Eric, going back to your childhood, tell me about your favorite books.*

SHANOWER: My favorite books. Well, the *Oz* books start off the list. I also like the books by George McDonald: *The Princess and the Goblin*, *The Princess and Curdie*, which L. Frank Baum probably read. I liked H. Rider Haggard's books. I don't think he's really a good writer but his books interest me, and they're exciting, even though he had real problems with style. I like the Narnia books by C.S. Lewis. C.S. Lewis is one of my favorite writers. All his writings, not just his children's books or not just his fiction. Eloise Jarvis McGraw, her books. She wrote the last *Oz* book in what is considered the canonical series. She was an established children's author long before she ever wrote an *Oz* book. She mostly doesn't write fantasy, but she just happened to write an *Oz* book once and had it published.

AH: *Is the* Wizard of Oz *now in public domain?*

SHANOWER: Yes, it's been in public domain since 1956. *The Wizard* continues to sell. It's never been out of print. It's obviously the most famous one.

AH: *How many Oz books were there in the series?*

SHANOWER: Baum wrote 14.

AH: *What year did he write the last one?*

SHANOWER: No one really knows when he wrote the last four or which order they came, but the last one was published in 1920. It was published posthumously. He died in 1919. But he'd had four manuscripts completed a couple years before he died. And so they put out the last Oz book a year after he died.

AH: *Did he write other books?*

SHANOWER: Yes, he wrote over 70 books. He didn't start really writing until he was about 43 years old. He wrote a few children's books and a couple other books before that. He wrote girl's series, he wrote boy's series, he wrote under several pseudonyms. He wrote several adult novels. He wrote some fantasies for younger children, and then he wrote fantasies that were about on the same level as the *Oz* books. Those were probably his most successful books.

AH: *I understand there's a big* Wizard of Oz *fan movement in the country. Can you tell me a little bit about that?*

SHANOWER: Well, there's "The International Wizard of Oz Club." I wouldn't exactly call it a movement. They just celebrated their 30th birthday this year. I've been in it since 1973. It's actually worldwide. We have members in, Sweden, and India and Japan and places like that.

AH: *What does Oz fandom do?*

SHANOWER: Well, basically the main thing is the magazine that comes out three times a year. "The Baum Bugle." It's scholarly articles, popular articles, little known writings of Oz authors, book reviews, movie reviews, stage reviews, etc.

AH: *Do you ever have any conventions, where you get together?*

SHANOWER: Sure. There's three major conventions a year, and several little ones. I've been to all three. I usually go to the West Coast one. They're fun sometimes. The Oz club has been a big thing in my life at times, sometimes bigger than others. It's caused me to feel great love and great hate and great frustration.

AH: *That's an interesting comment. Let's talk about the great hate.*

SHANOWER: The great hate? I don't know if I want to talk about that. Well, I can come up with at least one concrete instance, but it's not a very good story. I did a piece of artwork for a convention program cover, and I gave it to the chairman of the convention. I told him that I wanted the piece of artwork back. He said, sort of non-committally, "all right." I made it very clear to him that I wanted it back. He had it printed up. I didn't get it back, and I wrote him several letters which he claimed he never got. I asked him, I think it was a year or two later, for it. He said he had it framed and hanging on his wall! I said I wanted it back. I still didn't get it back. Several years later, I asked him for it again. I had other people in the Oz club ask him to give it back to me. He says now that it was burned in a fire that was at his house. But... what can I do about it?

AH: *Could you do the drawing over again?*

SHANOWER: I couldn't do *that* drawing over again. It was a drawing that meant a lot to me.

AH: *Okay, that's a good example of your hatred for Oz fandom. However, this is just one isolated incident, right? On the whole what do you think of your fellow Ozians? What do you call yourselves?*

SHANOWER: There's no real name. Some people call 'em Ozzies. Or Ozmapolitans, or Ozites, or...

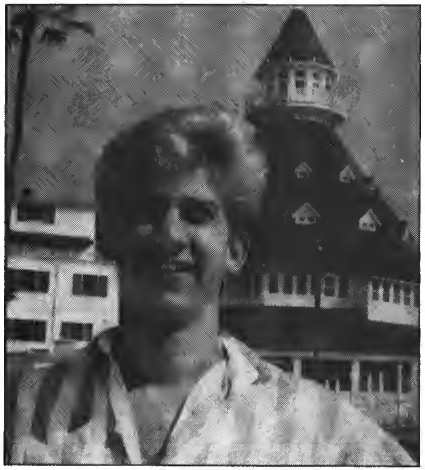
AH: *I like that. Let's call 'em Ozmapolitans. That's great.*

SHANOWER: All right, but there's no real name.

AH: *So these Ozmapolitans, are spread all over the world. Do they have any impact on what kind of Oz material that is published?*

SHANOWER: One of them had a hand in *Return to Oz*. And that was a bomb. So, I don't know. It was a bomb, B-O-M-B, not B-A-U-M. But on the whole, the Oz club viewed *Return to Oz* as pretty bad. The Oz club itself has published several little known and long out of print *Oz* related material. They just published one of L. Frank Baum's fantasies for younger children, not *Oz*, but one that was originally written under a pseudonym.

Eric Shanower in front of Hotel del Coronado, where Frank L. Baum often stayed



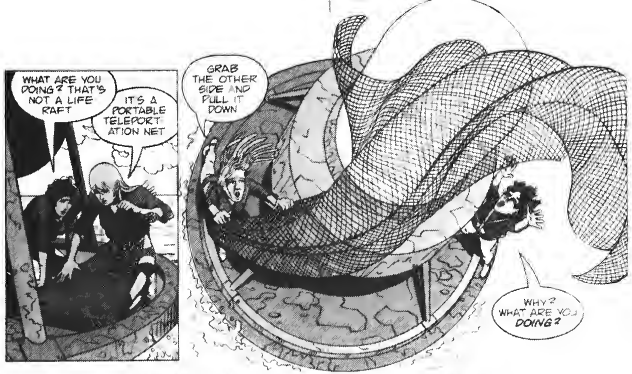
AH: *I think it's great when you have such a club connected with something in public domain. You don't have to worry about copyrights. How did First Comics become interested in publishing your Oz books?*

SHANOWER: Well, I had wanted to do an *Oz* comic book for a long time. When I was in art school, I started coming up with a proposal. I wrote a little story and started doing some samples and Sal Amendola was one of my teachers and he was an editor at DC Comics at the time. He said, "This looks good! DC might be interested in it." He said that if they were interested, they would buy the rights to the *Oz* books to do them as a comic book. Not *all* of the *Oz* books are in public domain. Just the first six, so I was using characters that were still under copyright. I was working on that for a while but it kind of fizzled out and, looking at it now, it's a good thing it fizzled out because it wasn't very good.

Then, near the end of the year, one of my final projects was for Joe Kubert, and it was a project that, if we wanted to do a war story, we could have printed as a back-up in *Sgt. Rock* comics, which Joe edited.

AH: *At the time you were attending the Joe Kubert Cartoon School in New Jersey?*

SHANOWER: Yeah, and this was the last assignment before graduation from Joe's class. So actually I wrote two stories, one about Byzantine warriors in Constantinople and one about General Jinjur fighting the gnomes, which is, you know the stories, those are Oz characters. It was basically an Oz war story. So, Joe asked me which one I wanted to do, and I said well, I wanted to do the Oz one. And he goes "Well, all right." It was going to be a two-part story, each four-page chapters, to run in two consecutive issues of *Sgt. Rock*. So I did the first segment. I turned it in, and for various reasons I decided I didn't want it to run. So it didn't run and I got the story back. While it was up at DC, Nick Cuti saw it. He was an editor there at the time too. He was supposed to be in charge of DC's children line, which they were going to start. I guess they were going to... now I don't know if this is the exact way it went, but Marvel had just started Star Comics and I think DC was going to wait around a little while to see if Star was very successful or not. This is just the impression I had. Nick Cuti was interested in seeing some Oz material from me. So, I came up with a rather extensive proposal for an *Oz* comic book series. It was kind of based on the one I had done earlier, but it wasn't exactly the same, using just



From *Nexus* #13 back-up entitled "The Grab" art and lettering by Shanower. script by Mike Baron.

characters that were in public domain, and he liked it, but I guess there were problems with DC's proposed children's line, obviously it never happened.

AH: *So, you had an eight page Oz story on your hands?*

SHANOWER: I never finished the one for *Sgt. Rock*. It's still only four pages long. I actually got to layouts for the second half, but I never did it. The woman who runs the Oz club fiction magazine, which they publish once a year, wants me to finish that story so they can run it. I just don't have the time to do it and I don't like anything I wrote anyway so I probably won't do it.

AH: *But you really learned a lot by going through this process anyway. It's not a totally wasted effort. You can always rewrite the ending at some future date.*

SHANOWER: No, that story was part of my proposal. The Oz book proposal. So, it served some purpose. I mean it got me my last grade in school. I had to do it anyway. Then I was inking *Nexus* and I had inked one issue and I said, "Oh my God. I can*not* be an inker, because it will just drive me crazy. I want to draw."

AH: *What was it about inking that you didn't like?*

SHANOWER: It was the fact that it was just a mechanical process and I didn't have to do anything really, except go over someone else's lines. I'm very grateful for the opportunity to ink Steve Rude's work, because I think he's one of the best artists in comics, but I don't think I'm very suited for inking over an extended period of time, so I decided, "Look, this is just something I can't do." So I took that Oz proposal and I sent it to most of the major comic book publishers. First was very interested in it and so was WaRp and I really was having a tough time deciding which one I wanted to publish it. And so I hired Mike Friedrich as my agent, because I didn't know what was going on. Well, First wanted to print it as a graphic novel series, which I hadn't originally intended. I just wanted to do a regular comic book series, and WaRp said they would do it any way both of us agreed upon. They wanted it eventually published as graphic novels like their Elfquest series. But finally I decided to go with First, because they seem to have a better deal and I had a publishing history with them already.

AH: *Eric, What made you decide on that particular style? It comes closer to being a children's book or a graphic novel. It's a different style.*

SHANOWER: Because it is a children's book and a graphic novel. Because comic book art is so run of the mill and shoddy looking to me. I don't care who I insult by saying that. I think comic book art is really looked down upon by most people in the world. Most people think comic books are trash and they wouldn't look twice at it. It's only a small ghetto who likes comics. And I'm not saying comics are bad. I'm just saying I don't like many of the styles that are used in comics. I think, for my Oz book style anyway, partly it's just how I draw, partly it's how I try to adapt an Oz book style into my style. I want it to look more like a children's book illustration. That's what it's supposed to look like.

AH: *If you had gone with WaRp Graphics, they would have done it as a graphic novel, as opposed to a comic book, right?*

SHANOWER: Eventually they were thinking of printing it in black and white too. It's really a moot point now.

AH: *But the fact that you do your own color is interesting, because you have an interesting color look to your books.*

SHANOWER: Well, I didn't want to do my own color. I would be happy to give it to someone else who could do it exactly how I envisioned it, but that's never going to happen. I really don't enjoy the coloring part although I really want the control, so that's why I do it. In the beginning I remember wanting to get somebody else to do it, but now I wouldn't give it up. It's been a while since I began coloring the Oz books, so a lot of my ways of thinking have changed.

AH: *I've heard people talk about coloring their own work as being part of the creative process and they even think about what colors are going on when they're inking the book in black and white. They leave certain areas for the color to work by itself. Some colorists say that coloring is like orchestrating your own composition. Much more emotion can be brought out by choosing certain colors. I don't know if you're doing this consciously or subconsciously, but it's all there.*

SHANOWER: I really do it subconsciously. Before I even draw a scene, I know what it's going to look like pretty much, and when I'm pencilling it, I know how everything is going to be colored. I don't use color roughs even though that's the way I was always taught. Partly because I don't have time. Partly, because it's boring to do color roughs. I suppose that's really irresponsible of me, but that's what I do. I just start coloring and if it turns out, it turns out. If it doesn't turn out, thank God

A "homemade" comic by Shanower from 1972 starring himself, his sister, and friends.

for bleach! Well, now that I'm using Dr. Martin's instead of acrylics... acrylics I could paint over all the time, and it didn't matter. But now that I'm using Dr. Martin's, it has to be right the first time. Thank God they're using blue lines, where I can just cut the piece of paper out. If the color turns out wrong. I can just cut it out and put a new piece of paper in and color it again.

AH: *Oh, I see. The laser camera doesn't see that cut?*

SHANOWER: Well, I have to cut underneath the black line... where the black lines are going to be printed I can't just cut across an open area. But it's been pretty hairy... it was pretty hairy a couple times on coloring *Ice King* where I made several mistakes. There were a couple of panels where I didn't know what I was doing. But it all worked out anyway. No one could probably tell.

AH: *Have you always liked to tell stories, write stories?*

SHANOWER: Yeah, I've always written stories and stuff.

AH: *I know, earlier, you showed me some little comic books... little homemade comic books that you did as a youngster using your family as characters, and had little adventures with your sister. Can you talk a little bit about those books? How many have you done?*

SHANOWER: Well, I did about 14 of those. I started doing them in 1976. I did it as a surprise for my sister and two of our friends. We were all the stars of the comics. They were actually inspired by a "Little Audrey" story, where Little Audrey was drawing herself and Lucretia and Melvin having adventures. And I go "Hey, I could do this with my friends." So I started doing them. And they lasted until about 1981. When I got into art school, I just didn't have time to do them anymore. And after art school I started doing real comics, so...

AH: *It's a great training ground. I know several comic book artists who started that way, doing comic books on their own at home. Did you show any of these books to teachers along the way?*

SHANOWER: Well, they were part of my original portfolio to get into the Kubert school, but...

AH: *Well, I mean when you were a youngster. You were doing these at what age?*

SHANOWER: Well, I started drawing comic, real comics, I guess when I was in fifth grade. How old is that?

AH: *What I'm getting at is, was there any teacher that sort of encouraged you in this?*

SHANOWER: As far as comics, no. I had one teacher when I was in junior high school, that I took classes from after school for a couple of years, who saw comics the way I did, but I never really did comics for him. I did a lot of painting and a lot of pencil work and made stage designs and built some small stage set models. And he saw some of my comics. And he didn't encourage me in that way, but he saw something in them. I remember one time he mentioned, "If you're going to draw comics..." And at that time, I thought "Draw comics? Really? Come on." But I was 12 years old. He said "You're going to have to learn how to draw the human body and faces and expressions and stuff" so, he had me do a lot of anatomy at one point. I was doing a lot of bones and muscle studies, and I had to make some sculpture. It wasn't very good, but I had to make it anyway.

AH: *That was definitely a good influence in your career, then. A good solid foundation in life drawing runs right through the field. All your best artists have a good life drawing background.*

SHANOWER: Yes, I wasn't drawing life. I was mostly sketching out of books.

AH: *I see.*

SHANOWER: Well, it was from books. In fact, the anatomy book that they gave us at the Kubert school was the same book that this teacher had made me draw out of years before. It was kind of a surprise. It was like Whoaa, I know this book!

AH: *Do you remember the name of the book?*

SHANOWER: The name of the book is *An Atlas of Anatomy For Artists* by Fritz Scheider. There's some useful things in it. I suppose it's not the greatest book in the world, but I used it.

AH: *Tell me a little about the set designs you did. Which plays did you design sets for?*

SHANOWER: I did one for "A Christmas Carol." I don't know what adaptation it was. For "Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp." I don't know what adaptation that was. I did one for "Finishing Touches" by some really famous woman humorist, but I don't remember her name.

AH: *Did you work on the flats?*

SHANOWER: No, I just made a little set, like a model. As if this was what was going to be built. I was in the show at the time... I didn't approach it with any scientific or thematic set of mind or like, well, this is what I want the audience to feel or get across or anything like that. I just did it.

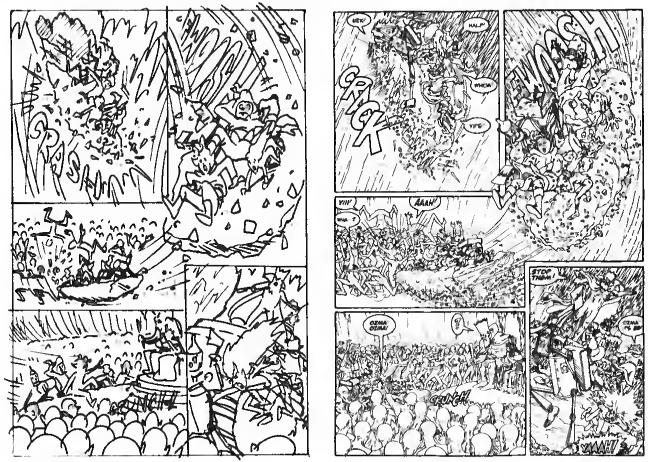
AH: *Well, that's a whole art in itself.*

SHANOWER: Yeah, stagecraft. I was only in junior high school and the teacher was letting me do what I wanted to do, and providing guidance. He would give me assignments to do, but it was kind of loose.

AH: *Your work is at such a profess-*

ional level now, at what I consider a relatively young age. You're only twenty-four, right?
SHANOWER: Right.
AH: *And here you are writing and drawing your own graphic novels.*
SHANOWER: Well, I just see it as an extention of what I've been doing all my life. I wrote my first "Oz book" in third grade. It wasn't very good, but it was an Oz book.
AH: *Tell me about your family background. Are your parents college graduates?*
SHANOWER: Well, my mother is. My dad went to the Coast Guard Academy.
AH: *So, they encouraged higher learning in the arts?*
SHANOWER: Oh, I don't know. My mother had definite problems with me going to a cartooning school right out of high school.
AH: *She wanted you to be a lawyer or a doctor?*
SHANOWER: Well, she said those sort of half joking, like "You have so much more potential, why can't you be a lawyer or a doctor or something like that?" But I told her "Come on, Mom, get real. This is what I want to do." And she goes, "Yeah, I know, but . . . " My father was always supportive. My parents were always supportive. I can't say they were always encouraging, but they were never discouraging.
AH: *That's important by itself. Eric, you've also done comic book work, as distasteful as it might have been for you. It pays well too, and you're very skilled at doing this kind of work. I'm referring to the "Badger" books that you're doing for First. Can you talk a little bit about your attitude toward "Badger?"*
SHANOWER: I did one full length *Badger* story and I just completed a back-up. It hasn't been printed yet. They're mostly just sort of a change of pace and just to get some more money and exposure. I didn't ask to do them. I was asked by First Comics to do them. Comic book work isn't distasteful to me. It's fun, but it's not what I would like to do all the time. Badger's a funny character. I really like him, because he doesn't take himself seriously.
AH: *You work in an interesting style too. It's between a "bigfoot" and a serious style. Do you consciously try for a style or is this just what comes out?*
SHANOWER: It's mostly just what comes out. When I started doing the Oz books, I had to consciously find a style which I would consider my style, because I had just come off of inking *Nexus* for ten months over Steve Rude, who is very different from me in a lot of ways, but I see some similiarities in places. I had done several back-ups for *Nexus* and I did pencil an issue of *Nexus*. However, once I got on the Oz books, I adopted different tools, a different frame of mind, and now that's how I draw. I approach super-hero work in the same way.
AH: *Eric, when you're approaching a blank page, and you have a script in your hand, what goes through your mind about this page? Do you have a goal in visual story telling or do you just usually pick out the first composition that comes to mind, and how do you balance a page?*
SHANOWER: Well, the most important thing to me when I'm working on something that I haven't written is to get the story onto the page and make sure that what the writer has written is there, so that the reader can see what's going on, and see me interpret what the writer means. To compose a page, I just . . . I don't know how I do it exactly, I do it. There are some conscious things I do. I try to have each panel look like a good composition. I don't try to compose an entire page.
AH: *Do you make thumbnail sketches?*
SHANOWER: Oh, yes, I always do. Layouts, I mean that's what I call layouts, or roughs or whatever. Yes, I always do those. I usually just do one per page, unless there's something I don't like about it, and often while I'm pencilling I will change one if I decide I don't like it. But I don't make a lot of changes. Usually I just do what's there.

Shanower's sketches and final artwork from "The Ice King of Oz" 1987 graphic novel. Note how close he keeps to them.



Shanower's work on *Nexus* (above from #29) told him being an inker was not in his future, although he enjoyed inking Steve Rude.

AH: *Have you learned from observing other cartoonists' work or talking to other comic book artists?*
SHANOWER: I guess I've learned the most just by reading comics, which I've been reading ever since I was really little. You know, like four maybe. I was reading *Tin Tin*. I don't try to copy anybody. We can learn a bit by just looking at everything.
AH: *Your career right now, is in comic books, but can you see doing a children's book for that market? It's a very different market. I know you have certain favorites in that field.*
SHANOWER: Yes, I have several connections. There will probably be a time when I'll be doing children's books, but I don't think I want to stay in that field, because I see the comic's field, the graphic novel aspect of it especially, opening up. I think I should be doing graphic novels. I just think they seem so right to me. They feel good. They just seem right, and I hope graphic novels . . . will become more accepted by the general public, so that I can actually start making a living from them.
AH: *What stories would you like told?*
SHANOWER: I have several ideas, but I don't want to say anything at this point.
AH: *Do you feel that the children's books in the stores and the libraries are such that modern children can really relate to them?*
SHANOWER: It depends on the child and the book. There are all sorts of children's books and there are all sorts of children and you match the right kid up with the right book.
AH: *Do you think we can use children's books as a social reform tool?*
SHANOWER: I'm sure it's possible. I'm not going to say that this is the best way to socially reform someone. Good children's books with universal themes can appeal to anyone. Good children's books with sound moral structures can teach children good things. A well-read child is very fortunate. Personally, I think, a lot of the problem with the world today is that there's too much TV and no matter how much TV tries to put in good sound values, it's not the same as a good book. You can have a relationship with a book, but all you can do is watch a TV.
AH: *That's an interesting comment. How do you have a relationship with a book?*
SHANOWER: When you read it, it becomes a personal thing. I don't know how to describe it exactly, but I know for myself there are books that are my favorite books, simply because reading them makes me feel really good and it gives me a really good experience. I suppose that could happen for TV, but I just don't see it as quite the same thing. With a book you have a physical object that you can hold on to. You can hold onto TV, but you can't hold on to the program that you just saw. I suppose you could tape it, but . . .
AH: *Usually with TV you're watching with somebody else. A book is a more solitary experience, right?*
SHANOWER: Yeah.
AH: *Or if you're a parent and you read to your children. I know parents get a lot of pleasure out of that.*
SHANOWER: Well, that even adds more beyond the book. That's a bonding experience between parent and child. Even if the book is really crummy, the kid'll probably still like it.
AH: *The movie, "The Princess Bride" has that theme. The grandfather read a book to this child who really hadn't been taught the beauty of having a book read to him. When the grandfather gets to the cliff hangers, the kid becomes more and more interested. He's no longer a reluctant listener. He really cares about what happens in the story.*
SHANOWER: If it's a well-written book, the reader is going to care what happens in the story. That's what's so good about books. You can make someone actually experience an emotion with just words printed on a page. That's great, isn't it?
AH: *It is. That's a good motivating force, for you isn't it? You can move people with your thoughts.*
SHANOWER: Yeah.
AH: *Who are some of your favorite children book illustrators? Sometimes there are writer/illustrators. But for now let's just talk about the artists that are some of your favorites.*
SHANOWER: Okay, John R. Neill is probably my biggest influence, because he illustrated the Oz books. Fredrick Richardson illustrated one of Baum's books. I've seen a lot of his other illustration, and none of it I've liked as much as the one he illustrated for Baum. It wasn't an Oz book, it was another fantasy. I like Mercer Mayer very much. Not his older stuff, but the stuff he's been doing the last couple of years, the fairy tales he's been doing. His painting style influenced "The Ice King" colors a lot.
AH: *How about classic book illustrators like Wyeth?*
SHANOWER: Mucha. I'm afraid to say Alphonse Mucha because he's so trendy, or he was a couple of years ago, but yeah, Mucha. I discovered him when I was a senior in high school. I had to paint a cancan girl for a school play, for a set on the wall and the teacher got me some poster books. Mostly Toulouse-Lautrec, to see the cancan girl for a school play, for a set on the wall and I fell in love with him. I know I'm attracted to Mucha partly because of John R. Neill. John R. Neill was alive at the same time. And he was illustrating the Oz books, just after the turn of the century and the big poster movement in Europe. Neill is kind of a rip-off artist. It's obvious he was greatly influenced by Charles Dana Gibson and probably Joseph Clemett Cole, but Neill was the first one I saw. When I saw Gibson girls, I go "That looks

like John R. Neill!" Not the other way around. But Neill did an amazing amount of work and some of it is very good.

AH: *I think it's great that you have the respect for those craftsman that went before. We can always learn from the past can't we?*

SHANOWER: Yeah, we'd better!

AH: *We can't live in the past, but you can just add whatever is you into the pot... your own style will eventually take over.*

SHANOWER: We hope.

AH: *Do you have anything else you'd like to add?*

SHANOWER: Read Oz books, read Oz graphic novels.

AH: *Let's talk about the philosophy behind Oz, the Wizard of Oz.*

SHANOWER: Money.

AH: *No, the movies. They've got "courage," "belief in yourself," "appreciate your home environment," whatever. What's the other one the "heart," the "courage"...*

SHANOWER: The "brains".

AH: *The brains, thank you. I wonder if it was all that popular with the "dropout and turn-on" generation? You're beyond that. The generation that came before yours was the "turn-on" generation. Just live for the pleasure and the hell with higher education and never trust anybody over thirty and all that stuff. How stupid all that seems now. It was self destructive, very self destructive.*

SHANOWER: Well, the 1960s was when Reilly and Lee the company publishing the Oz books, decided to try to restart the series. They came out with the 40th book and they came out with several adaptations and they came out with a lot of stuff and a lot of publicity, and it all went nowhere. 1963 was the end of what's considered the canonical Oz series.

AH: *So, the time is right to try again. How have your books been received?*

SHANOWER: Well, I haven't seen a bad review anywhere. A lot of people say they really like the art work, but don't like the subject matter. I get letters from people I don't know, most of them in the Oz club, saying "We want a monthly Oz series" and stuff like that, and "do more and make them longer." The biggest complaint I get about the series as a whole is that they're not long enough. And I once asked a group of Oz people whether they would be willing to wait five years for a five hundred page graphic novel, and they go "Yes." I didn't expect them to say yes. I replied, "Well, I don't think I'd do it. I don't think First Comics would want to publish it either."

AH: *How would you eat in the meantime?*

Art for *The Scarecrow of Oz* by John R. Neill—Shanower's greatest influence.

SHANOWER: I don't know. They don't realize the agony I go through to get *one* of them done in eight months.

AH: *How about writing the script for an animated film? You must have very set opinions about what you think good Oz stories are.*

SHANOWER: An Oz film?

AH: *Yes, have you thought of script writing or calling an animation company and getting together on a new Oz film?*

SHANOWER: No, I haven't. There is a small animation company that is doing an adaptation of the *Wizard*, in like a Disney style. Not just the style, but using all of the Disney techniques. They're doing the Masterpiece Theatre adaptation. Everything is just like it was in the book. You know, Masterpiece Theatre always does it with all their adaptations. They're doing it the real way, no ruby slippers, no Glinda flying in a bubble, no greedy witch, no "it was all a dream."

AH: *Gee, maybe we should talk about the famous movie*, The Wizard of Oz?

SHANOWER: You don't want to hear what I have to say about it. I love that movie. I hate talking about it. I hate hearing anybody else talk about it. I hate thinking about it. I'd like to watch it alone, by myself, in a movie theatre and not think about it once I left. I have kind of like a love/hate relationship with it. It's pervasive to the extent that it blocks out anything else having to do with Oz. Which really makes me so incredibly angry, but at the same time I go "That's a really good movie." It used to be my very favorite movie in the world.

AH: *But then when you compare the original source material you're not pleased with the movie?*

SHANOWER: No, I like the movie in and of itself, what gets me angry is only how it's warped other people's view of Oz, when they don't even know what the real thing is.

AH: *How far from the real... I have never read the first Oz book...*

SHANOWER: You've never read *The Wizard of Oz?*

AH: *No, I just depended on the movie. How does it differ?*

SHANOWER: Well, there's a lot more adventures. Basically the story is the same. The themes are basically the same, although the movie tends to over-sentimentalize it to such an extent that a lot of critics say that the major flaw of the movie is that it's so sentimental, whereas the book is written in a very pedestrian style. It's very matter of fact. The first time I read the book, I couldn't believe that there was so much going on. I went "Oh, this is so great. This is great. This never happened in the movie. Oh, wow!" Because, of course, the movie is only an hour and a half long and they had to cut out so much. And the movie's focus is more on the witch as the major villain, whereas the major conflict in the book is Dorothy trying to get home. The movie shifts much more to Dorothy and her conflict with the witch. Whereas in the book the witch is not exactly a minor villain, but she's subordinate to the main plot. Which may turn people off if they like the movie a whole lot. I like the movie a whole lot, and I like the book even *better*. Some people have said the wizard is the major villain in the book. But he's so wishy-washy, I can't really call him a villain.

AH: *Do you think the message there is to "believe in yourself"? Like, the musical version* The Wiz? *Let's talk a little bit about that. I remember the song that Lena Horne sang. It was probably the keystone.*

SHANOWER: I've never seen the stage play, I've only seen the movie. The stage play, from what I've heard, was very much more true to the book, than the M.G.M. movie. Which is fine with me. I would like to see the play, but I've never seen it. It was on Broadway, while I was living on the east coast. It was revived, but I didn't get the chance to go see it. The movie *The Wiz* was really boring and scary. The first half of it was so dark and gloomy and scary and awful that it was just really uncomfortable to sit through. I really like the fact that Michael Jackson is in it, because he later became such a big star, and now he's such a joke that it's really funny that he was in it. I always ask people in the Oz club, "What Michael Jackson albums do you have?" You've got all of them, right? Because he was in *The Wiz* and you've got to have everything connected with The Wizard of Oz, if you're in the Oz club, right? So, I ask them how many Michael Jackson albums they have in their Oz collection. I don't have any.

AH: *I think maybe he's created a character of himself, with the one glove thing.*

SHANOWER: He's a caricature.

AH: *He could fit right into Oz, couldn't he?*

SHANOWER: No!

AH: *No? Well, we don't know who he is.*

SHANOWER: He might be able to fit into the M.G.M. movie, but I don't think he could fit into real Oz.

AH: *He's a very bizarre individual. He goes from this enormous adulation of thousands to almost complete isolation, with him and his man servant or whoever. I think he's socially maladjusted which a lot of artists are. We could get into that, couldn't we? How the cartoonist is like a mank. They work alone, like in a manastery.*

SHANOWER: That's the price you pay if you're a creative person. You have to. You have to shut out the world, because you have your own private vision, which must be so strong that it must shut out the world. Because if you let the world encroach on you, you're going to start short changing yourself and your vision.

AH: *That's very good Eric. I like that.*

SHANOWER: But I like to party too!

AH: *You have to. You have to do a little bit of both. But, I find eight manths to do a book, is a long time in this business. I mean especially in the comic book business. Has anybody told you you've got to get faster or anything?*

SHANOWER: No. People have said to me "Gee, you should go on a regular series. If you had a book coming out every month, you'd have so many fans." And I go "But I do have a regular series." And they go "Yeah, but you know what I mean." And I just go, yeah I know what they mean, but that's something I wouldn't want to do.

AH: *Well, considering the glut on the market, I think it's good that you have the pace that you have. There's just too much junk being ground out by the printing presses.*

SHANOWER: If the comic shops would stop ordering the self-published stuff which is basically the worst of it.

AH: *I call them the "not ready for prime time comic book people."*

SHANOWER: Yeah there's a lot of them. If the comic store would just order the professional-level stuff.

AH: *When I was in comic fandom in a much larger way, in the early '60s, there was a whole network of fanzines mimeographed or insta-printed or whatever. But it seems to me that the black and white books now on the market are fanzine level.*

SHANOWER: Yeah, they are. People seem to have money these days to gamble.

AH: *You see all the mistakes they make, the lousy writing and bad artwork. A psychiatrist could have a lot of fun with some of the sexual undertones of some of these books.*

SHANOWER: Well, you aren't just talking about fanzine level, are you? You're talking about regular comics. I mean two muscular men dressed in tights hitting each other and wrestling around with each other. Come on. What does that say? And super-hero women don't sell as well as men in tights do. What does that mean? I wonder.

AH: *Well, Dr. Fredric Wertham had his theories, didn't he? About Batman and Robin. In any case, the writers and artists themselves, to me, are going through an advanced adolescence and it's all coming out in their work. I think that's nice for a while, but I don't want to buy it in a comic book store, you know? I say "oh, I remember seeing that expression, that pose in a fanzine in the '60s. I see nothing new. It bores me to pieces. But each generation is reinventing it every time for themselves.*

SHANOWER: It's valid for them, the only problem is that this time *Teenge Mutant Ninja Turtles* was worth a lot of money and because one book was worth a lot of money, everyone else jumped on the bandwagon and they found out how cheap it was to print a black and white comic and decided to put their adolescent scribblings out there. I mean I have my adolescent scribblings in my closet.

AH: *Okay, that's a good place for them.*

SHANOWER: But if I had been able to publish them at that time, I certainly would have. And that's what these people are doing today. There's nothing wrong with that, it's just that, someone thinks that they'll be worth a lot of money simply because *T.M.N.T.* was. But they're fooling themselves, because they're not going to be worth money. Still you've got people buying them.

AH: *Well, this is a good place to stop. Thanks for doing this Eric. It's a pleasure getting to know you. I respect what you've accomplished at such a tender age.*

SHANOWER: Thanks, Shel. ●

Just one panel from Eric Shanower's "Ice King of Oz"—the detail goes on for hours.

Eccentricities & Attitudes

The NEW SMALL PRESS WATCH

by Heidi MacDonald

Birth of the Cool: A while ago I happened to be watching MTV's year's end review, and when it got to Publishing in 1987, China Kantner (or that guy who looks just like China Kantner) solemnly informed us that "the graphic novel came of age in 1987." And if MTV says it, it must be so.

This column is going to pick up where Scott McCloud's *Small Press Watch* left off. That much is pretty simple. But first I have to ramble some. Why should we pay attention to mini-comics? Why should we pay attention to the dreaded black and whites? The answer, I think, is self evident, but for those coming in late, let this opening shot serve as a manifesto of sorts.

We've been through what the Chinese euphemistically (but charmingly) refer to as "Interesting Times" over the past two years in the comics biz. I haven't spoken with a single person involved in the comics industry who isn't still appalled by what took place during the Black & White "Boom." It was like mass hysteria, St. Vitus's Dance, or something. Looking back, everyone sees it for the giant hoax that it was, but that didn't stop retailers and distributors from sinking their dollars into books that were truly not worth the paper they were printed on.

And Bad Art drove out the Good. Publishers who were simply interested in putting out quality work found themselves losing rack-space to books by kids who would have been turned down for fanzines a decade ago. Unsurprisingly, there was no audience for these. Dealers didn't even seem to realize what was happening until it was too late. Thus, one could hardly blame all those publishers for cashing in.

And ironically, the whole fiasco was disguised as a search for "quality books."

See, I call it "The Next *Cerebus* Syndrome."

Everyone's looking for the Next *Cerebus*. The Next *Love and Rockets*. The Next *Grendel*.

Maybe the proper name is "*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* Syndrome," since that is really the book which started this snowball to Hell. But for all its influence, *TNMT* is still a parody. Yeah, *Cerebus* started as a parody, but I think we'd all agree that it's moved a bit beyond that these days.

The fact is that just about all of today's most artistically acclaimed creators started out with something less than trumpet fanfares and acres of red carpet before them.

Distributors could rationalize, when on a zombie-like overordering binge, that maybe Pustulant, Pestilant Piglets would turn out to be The New *Cerebus*, and Lucky Lou Swackhammer would turn out to be the new Frank Miller.

And despite my many tirades against the black and white scourge, there's a grain of truth in that. It's not going out on a limb to predict that five years from now, some of the creators who got started during the Black and White Scourge will be the Hot Young Superstars Of The Moment.

But you don't ruin an industry just in case a book *might* someday turn out to be the *beginning* of *something* that's kind of interesting. Show me one funny animal parody book as stylishly and thrillingly off-the-wall as *Flaming Carrot*. Please.

That brings us to the second topic of this discourse, namely "The Cool and the Crazy."

Returning to MTV for a moment, we observe that it has a program called "The Cutting Edge" which features experimental videos by groups with names like Scruffy the Cat, et al. (Remember when *any* video was the cutting edge?)

We live in a jaded culture, a media saturated culture, a culture where the lifespan of the average trend is about the same as that of a lobster in the bottom of your fridge.

When something is "in fashion," it is pretty much implicit in the term that it will someday be "out of fashion." ("In my beginning is my end," ol' Thomas Sterns Eliot reminds us by way of "East Coker"). This is what makes life "bittersweet."

Of course, if you're like me, you believe that even though graphic albums are this year's hot trend, comics as a mature art form are here to stay. Comics are "hot." Thus comics are "cool." Comics are "the cutting edge."

But, like it or not, to stay cool, hot and cutting edge, the public demands Ever New Thrills. I mean, there's Cool and then there's *Permanent* Cool, like Diz, Miles, Martha Graham, *Citizen Kane*, *Krazy Kat* and *Little Lulu*. Those things will never be any less than totally hip, but the cutting edge does get dull after a while. Call it "*Miami Vice* Syndrome."

So what this column about is nothing less than an enquiry into the Cutting Edge, a quest for cool, if you will. I mean, we know that *Concrete* is the next *Cerebus*, but what's the next *Concrete*?

I may not know the answer, but I think we'll have fun finding out.

I still think mini-comics and small press comics and black and white comics are, pound for pound, cooler than your average four color Marvel or DC. Or even your First, Comico or Eclipse. This is an insulting generalization, to be sure, but where better to generalize than in a manifesto.

It's another cliche that, by virtue of being obscure, something automatically acquires a cachet of cool. (Janacek's *Lachian Dances* are cooler than Dvorak's *Slavonic Dances* although both have got a beat, and you can dance to either). I'm under no illusion that being obscure *is* more fun.

Over the years it's been my pleasure to see such titles as *Beamworld* and *Fish Police* grow from strange surprises in my mailbox to established titles with followings all their own. The very first time I saw *Neil the Horse* was in a very, very obscure Canadian fanzine, but even then, I knew this strip was a little gem. (And rumor has it we'll be seeing *Neil* as star of page and screen in the future). It's amazing how many of today's Bold Young Turks got their start with mini-comix and the real small press.

Paul Chadwick's *Concrete*. The Next *Cerebus*. The next *Concrete*? Is one possible?

Lest we forget, the Black & White Explosion also tended to drown out what we used to call the *true* small press—the mini comix, the truly bizarre but exciting experimentation that went on in mail art.

So armed only with pluck, daring and a belief in my own tastes that borders on solipsism, I'll be sifting through material in search of only what is truly bizarre, outstanding, beautiful, fun, or just so goddam outrageous that it begs to be seen. Hence the title. And all for *you*, Gentle Reader. I refuse to limit myself to the world of Small Press, however. If I happen upon a Marvel Comic which I think is cool, spiffing, or just plain excellent, then I will feel compelled to cover this, as well.

We will specialize in the cool, the neat-oh, the spiffy and the precious. The standards of cool will be my own perverse standards of cool, but I tend to be pretty consistent. I run the danger of self-delusion, arrogance and many others, but such are the risks we must take in this day and age. I admit that I am copping an "attitude." When was the last time you saw an amoeba in Raybans, anyway?

And that brings me to my plea: small press publishers, artists, whoever, are invited—nay, begged—to flood my mailbox. Dear Abby's P.O. Box is just around the corner from mine, and I want to give her a run for her money. But I can't do it without YOU.

I can't review *everything* that I receive, but I'll do my darnedest to spotlight the best, to pinpoint trends, to keep a weather eye tuned to whatever may be "happening."

The address: Heidi MacDonald, P.O. Box 691446, West Hollywood, CA 90069.

Past "correspondents" of mine know that soliciting me as a penpal is a hopeless task—I am the world's slowest letter writer, and my 9-5 toils at the offices of *The Hollywood Reporter* leave me even less spare time than in years past. However, I guarantee that *everyone* who writes to me, and includes an s.a.s.e., *will* receive a reply.

And if any people are out there who I offended gravely in the past by not answering their letters—um, let's try again. I'd love to hear from you.

Okay?

Next time: while we wait for those cards and letters, the Eleven Ultra Cool Comics chill in the spotlight. Until then, let's join Pete, Roger, John and Keith for a chorus of "Won't Get Fooled Again." And I promise never to be so damned full of myself ever again. ●

IS HE MAN . . .
. . . OR DEMON?

The answers begin in NEXT MONTH's

ETERNITY™ SMITH

CELEBRATING SUPERMAN

by Michael Eury

Superman has been a friend to me for about as long as I can remember. When I was but a tyke, George Reeves ranked right up there with Captain Kangaroo, Fred Flintstone, Mickey Mouse, and Annette Funicello as my favorite TV stars.

Then I discovered comic books, and spent hundreds of hours mesmerized by the imaginative (yet often patently absurd) concepts woven into Superman stories: the Bottle City of Kandor, the peculiar square-shaped world of the backwards Bizarros, Comet the Super-Horse, Jimmy Olsen's signal watch, and jewel kryptonite, just to name a few.

Despite the inherent silliness of those 1960s comics, I noticed, even at a young age, that there is something... well, *super* about Superman. Not just his powers, mind you, but the ideals for which he stands: Truth, Justice, The American Way, Good, Politeness. Here's a guy *so nice* that he always finds time to rescue a cat from a tree, no matter what major crisis may be pending at the moment!! Superman is *not* simply a fantasy figure—he is the embodiment of the best of humanity, what each of us is capable of and what we should try to be. He's sort of a secular Christ for the masses.

As this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of The Man of Steel, I recently began to ponder ways how I might commemorate this milestone. Should I break open the Superman piñata I purchased in Mexico? Should I sit through a marathon viewing of my Superman videotapes? Should I finally don those Superman Underoos someone gave me as a gag gift? No, no, those gestures would only prove a *personal* tribute to the Action Ace. I pictured something on a grander scale, some type of birthday salute that would entice others to take notice.

Then an idea struck me with the impact of a powerful locomotive. I would correlate a collection of writings by famous authors and celebrities that dictated their impressions of Superman!

Perhaps you noticed some of the methods I employed to spread the word of my project to the media. I appeared on television's *Even Later Night With Larry "Bud"*

Melman, zealously appealing to the creative minds of the world. My pleas for material were included in articles running in such respected publications as *Boys Life* and *Popular Mechanics*. A full-sized billboard greeting drivers in Kinston, North Carolina touted my message.

"This is your chance to write a Superman story, the way *you* see fit," I said. "Give me your idea of the ultimate Superman epic!"

The news of my endeavor spread like wildfire. Soon my phone jingled off the hook, my answering machine was impregnated with queries, and my mailbox erupted with submissions—it seemed like almost everyone who was anyone wanted to pay tribute to Superman with his or her special brand of prose!

Mickey Spillane created "Kent Steel, Super Private Eye." Bob Woodward crafted an expose on corruption and lewd behavior in the field of newspaper journalism, "All of Perry White's Men," practically ignoring Superman for Clark Kent. A trio of *National Enquirer* writers suggested that Superman was the illegitimate son of John F. Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe, while another group from the *Enquirer* proposed that Superman and Elvis Presley are one in the same. Hunter S. Thompson submitted "Fear and Loathing in Metropolis," and Donna Rice penned "I Sailed With Superman."

And it didn't stop there. Evangelist Billy Graham envisioned the Man of Steel as "Super Messiah," a born-again Christian that saved souls as well as lives. On the opposite end of the spiritual spectrum, "Out on a Kryptonian Limb," Shirley MacLaine's treatise for the character, established that Superman is merely an astral projection of reporter Clark Kent.

In Sylvester Stallone's screenplay for "Superbo," Kent became a disgruntled Viet Nam vet who vented his brewing anger through missions as a special agent for the United States government. Feminist Gloria Steinhem elected to change the hero's gender and conceived "SuperMs.," and a collaboration between Mr. Blackwell and Calvin Klein fashioned "Superman: The Man of Style." From Stephen King's smoking typewriter came "Smallville's Curse," while astronomer Carl Sagan detailed a radiant thesis on Superman's home planet entitled "Who Speaks for Krypton?"

Had I realized the volume of response this project would generate, I probably would never have initiated it, yet despite the hard work, this endeavor was tremendous fun. I apologize to the creators mentioned above, but limited space will not allow for the inclusion of their pieces in this article. However, you are about to read a quartet of Superman treatments I deemed the best of the lot, and these works are respectfully dedicated to Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, creators of Superman.

"Superman"
by Dr. Seuss

He flies through the air with the greatest of ease,
He's very polite and he always says "please."
He's Superman and he's as strong as can be.
I doubt that there's anyone stronger than he!

No bullets can hurt him, he sees right through walls.
He zips to the rescue when Lois Lane calls.
His cape is bright red, there's an "S" on his chest.
Nobody can beat him, why yes, he's the best!

He said to Lex Luthor, "I wish you would go,
By Zike-Bike, by Chain-Train, by a car in tow!
Please get out of town, now, and take Brainiac.
I want you to leave, please don't ever come back!"

The Toyman's so nasty, he is such a heel,
But he will be captured by the Man of Steel!
Superman stops bad guys who like to rob banks,
Metropolis loves him, they give him their thanks.

"The Kryptonian's Passion"
by Danielle Steel

Lois Lane, the sensitive, sensuous reporter extraordinaire for *The Daily Planet*, rose to fame from her interviews with the new breed of men: the super-heroes. Her dedication to her career forced her to use any means at her disposal to meet these caped crusaders, including seduction.

Embittered by a string of affairs with men in colorful tights, Lois remembered the tortuous moments of hollow passion she shared, all fleeting, all unfulfilled. The Flash was too fast. Hawkman molted. Aquaman wet her bed. The Atom was too small to satisfy her.

The Batman was the best of these costumed lovers, but he was strange—he always wanted young Robin to watch.

Lying on her bed, her pink silk nightgown accenting the succulent curves of her svelte form, she voiced to herself, "I *must* have Superman, the only *true* man in the world!"

Her hands shaking from fright and perspiring from desire, Lois opened her bedroom window, exited, and stood dangerously on the ledge of her twentieth story apartment.

"Superman!"

"Superman!"

She repeatedly yelled the name of the god-man from the stars, the only super-hero she truly wanted.

"Superman!"

Looking down from the ledge, she noticed that the cars below seemed like miniature imitations of themselves. Her brow furrowed in anxiety and desire, she screamed again.

"Superman!"

They say he can hear anyone, anywhere on Earth. As he flew towards Metropolis, the evening wind coursing through the pronounced spitcurl in his rich ebon hair, he heard his name being called.

"Superman!"

Focusing his vision across a span of ten miles towards the source of the desperate cry, the Man of Steel spied her.

"Lois!!"

He soared to her, faster than a speeding bullet.

Within seconds, the Last of Son of Krypton reached the earthwoman he longed to hold. "My duty to mankind," he remembered. "I can't become involved."

He whisked her into his massive arms and gently escorted her into her bedroom through the open window. Distressed that his destiny as a hero forbade him from romance, he sadly yet politely spoke, "You really should be more careful, Miss Lane," then turned towards the window.

"Please... stop!" uttered the woman, craving this perfect male specimen. "You can't go. Please stay. I... I want to make love to you!"

Her enticing siren lured Superman towards her bed. He could not resist her sultry call.

"Take off your cape." Her words were harsh, piercing the Man of Steel's will as though they were forged by vocal cords of Kryptonite.

She watched intently as the alien undressed before her. She smiled as the majestic "S" on his shirt wrinkled into oblivion as Superman peeled off his bright blue tights, revealing a chest so muscular, so defined, it looked as if it were molded by a great sculptor.

Lois allowed the lace of her pink silk nightgown to tickle her as she lowered it, so slowly, exposing her creamy naked flesh.

Superman grabbed Lois firmly into his arms, but not too firmly, as he mere caress could easily snap her spine. His Kryptonian fingers glided through her long black mane, around her neck, then drifted down to gently circle her breasts.

Lois grinned wantonly and sought Superman's mouth with her fiery lips. As the sounds of Metropolis melted into the background, they kissed, forgetting everything else—*The Daily Planet*, Perry White's disgusting cigars, Lex Luthor's hatred, stopping tidal waves.

They became one.

The star creature's eyes were aglow with lustful flame. Heat vision.

"The bed's on fire!," shouted the lovely reporter.

Superman replied, "so am I!"

"Superman *omnia vincit*"
by William F. Buckley Jr.

It is axiomatic that the United States craves its heroes; it always has, and it always will. Heroes are necessary to foment the human spirit, to nature man's inspirational nature, and to bolster the confidence of citizens whose midriffs sag from jelly doughnut fixations. In previous decades, this nation has saluted soldiers, astronauts, and presidents as purveyors of justice. Unfortunately, the level of permissiveness of which modern liberals are so proud of has caused a systematic explosion in violations of our basic rights of freedom, beginning with governmental corruption during the Watergate scandal and culminating in a morally and sexually perverse society that scoffs at its venerable senior citizens and reveres gyrating rock music stars. The "hero" ideal has been polluted and tarnished into a form of teenybopper idolatry.

Extrapolating from these facts, Superman, the prodigiously powerful Man of Steel from the deceased planet of Krypton, would face multitudinous obstacles in his quest for truth, justice, and the American Way, most primarily the obstacle of *people*—people who have lost touch with what this caped crusader so ardently and fervently believes in and represents.

One must examine the inevitable social, spiritual, political, and economic ramifications that the mere presence of a "superman" would incur.

It is doubtful that a nation muddied with a history of racial strife would support an alien expatriate as its protector. It is doubtful that the religious community, which includes certain factions that impudently peddles sympathy on television to solicit donations, would tolerate such a super-powered "savior of mankind," since his existence itself would jeopardize the belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It is doubtful that a Superman could exist without bombardment from various world powers, plotting to educe his allegiance. It is doubtful that corporate conglomerates could resist enticing such a super-powered figure into multi-million dollar business ventures.

In essence, our contemporaneous society would not allow a "superman" to serve mankind. The Man of Steel's sole recourse would lie in his adoption of totalitarian tactics to "protect" humanity and to "direct" civilization into its proper place. Superman *omnia vincit*.

Play It Again, Superman
A Play in One Act
by Woody Allen

[The curtain rises on SUPERMAN, flying towards a window at the Daily Planet building. He looks down, frightened of the distance to the ground below.]

SUPERMAN

I hate flying. I get nosebleeds if I fly too high. What if I fall and plummet down to the pavement below? I'd probably land on a lawyer and get sued. Or what if I float off aimlessly into space? I'd be like that Woody Woodpecker balloon that broke loose from its support lines in last year's Macy's parade.

[SUPERMAN nervously stands on the window ledge and peers into an office window.]

SUPERMAN (cont.)

There it is. Lois Lane's office. I hope I'm not late for my interview. What a woman, that Lois! I can never get up the nerve to ask her out as Clark Kent. She's not interested in a guy who wears glasses. Maybe I'll score as Superman.

[Spotlight on the "spectral" figure of SUPERMAN's Kryptonian father, JOR-EL, who is standing on the ledge next to his son.]

JOR-EL

Kal-El, sweetheart, don't let this dame get to ya'. Take a good look at yerself, kid—you're strong, good-lookin', and ya've got powers far beyond those of mortal men. Th' dame'll *love* ya'!

SUPERMAN

I don't know, Dad. I'm really nervous. My heart is beating faster than that of a recovering alcoholic who won free tickets to a wine tasting convention.

JOR-EL

Ya' gotta take charge of yer life, kid. Fly right in through that window, grab th' dame by th' arm, and say, "C'mon, sweetheart—you an' me are goin' dancin'!"

SUPERMAN

Dancing? Are you kidding? I can't dance. I might step on Lois's feet. I'm super-strong, for God's sake. I'd break her toes!

JOR-EL

Then never mind th' dancin' kid. Just go in there an' show her what yer made of.

[SUPERMAN enters the office through the window, clumsily pulling down the venetian blinds in the process. JOR-EL, unseen by LOIS, enters behind his son.]

SUPERMAN
[embarrassed]

Uh, hello, Miss L-Lane—

LOIS
[Running over to assist SUPERMAN into a chair]

Superman! Here, have a seat—*[under breath]* before you break anything else. *[walking behind desk]* Thanks for coming today. let's get right into this interview, shall we? *[sits]*

SUPERMAN
[nervously]

S-sure, Miss Lane.

LOIS

So you are the sole survivor of the planet Krypton . . . *[taking notes]*

SUPERMAN

Yes, but I don't know why *my* planet had to explode. Why *Krypton*? Why not Centauri Seven, where everyone has those repulsive festering sores on their heads? Or why not Pluto, that frosty world full of frigid ice maidens and senile old men that stumble around with saliva freezing to their chins? Or why not New Jersey?

JOR-EL
[to Superman]

Not bad, kid. Yer breakin' th' ice!

LOIS

Your eyes—it's said that you can see through anything! That must be extremely helpful when searching for criminals.

SUPERMAN

Not really, Miss Lane. I'm afraid to use my x-ray vision. What if those x-rays cause medical problems? I could develop migraines. Maybe a brain tumor. Or even retina cancer!

JOR-EL
[to SUPERMAN]

I think she's warmin' up to ya', kid.

SUPERMAN
[to JOR-EL]

What do I do now, Dad?

JOR-EL
[to SUPERMAN]

Work yer way closer to th' dame—

[SUPERMAN slides his chair closer to LOIS, as JOR-EL coaches him along.]

LOIS

I understand you have only one weakness.

SUPERMAN

Two, if you include bagels with cream cheese and nova lox. There's also Kryptonite, radioactive remnants from my homeworld. Whenever I'm exposed to it, my skin swells up and turns bright green. I look like an inflatable love doll for the Jolly Green Giant's sister.

JOR-EL
[to SUPERMAN]

Make yer move, kid—it's now or never!

[SUPERMAN stumbles over to LOIS and puts his arm around her. LOIS is not amused.]

SUPERMAN

I was thinking, Miss Lane . . . you wouldn't want to have dinner with me tonight, would you? *[falls out of chair as he tries to get closer to LOIS]*

LOIS
[grimacing angrily]

No, you—I mean, let's keep our minds on the interview, okay?

[JOR-EL helps SUPERMAN off of the floor and back into his chair.]

SUPERMAN
[to JOR-EL]

Oh, great! You've helped me make a fool out of myself! Lois probably thinks I'm a super-pervert now!

JOR-EL
[to SUPERMAN]

Dames like ta' play hard ta' get, Kal. Give her a kiss. That's what she really wants.

SUPERMAN
[bending towards LOIS]

One of my favorite powers is my super-kiss, Miss Lane. *[puckers]* I just put my lips together, and BLOW!

[SFX: WIND]

[SUPERMAN blows LOIS out of her chair.]

LOIS
[furious]

What are you, some kind of nut?! *[rises from floor]*

SUPERMAN
[embarrassed]

I'm sorry, Miss Lane. I don't know what came over me. It must've been an outbreak of Kryptonite fever. I always get a touch of it this time of year.

LOIS
[pointing towards window]

I've had enough of you! GET OUT!!

[SUPERMAN and JOR-EL exit through the window and stand on the ledge. LOIS hurls obscenities at SUPERMAN as he leaves.]

SUPERMAN

Great! Thanks a lot, Dad! Now I'll NEVER get a date with her! I strike out more than a quadriplegic pinch hitter! I feel awful!

JOR-EL

It's nothin' a litle bourbon an' soda won't fix, kid. Ya' still gotta learn an imporant fact—dames are simple. I never met one who didn't understand a slap on th' mouth—or a blast of heat vision!

SUPERMAN
(staring into Lois's window)

Maybe she's got a sister . . .

(BLACKOUT)

THE END

So there you have it—Superman as seen by some of the most gifted minds of our time.

My thanks to the Man of Steel's past and present creators for entertaining me for such a long time. And my condolences to anyone who took this feature seriously (if you did, I've got this hot little plot of land just outside of Argo City that you may be interested in!).

Happy Birthday, Superman! Is it true that life only begins at fifty? ●

IT'S COMMENTIN' TIME! with Sidney Mellon

A NEW AGE A-BORNING

"This world has been harsh and strange. Something is wrong, there needeth a change."
—Bartlett's Familiar Quotations

In spite of my broad-mindedness, my enemies keep attacking me for supposedly not giving independent comics enough attention. Okay, so I'll give them attention. In fact, I wasted a whole weekend reading stacks and stacks of them. And guess what, enemies? I *still* didn't like them.

But in spite of what my enemies would have you believe, Sidney Mellon isn't the type to just attack something. If you have been reading my column, you know this. You know that I don't think I'm too high and mighty to comment on something just because it's beneath me. And if you read my last column, you know that I recently took the time and care to get to know some of the truly creative, sensitive, beautiful, and unconceited spirits behind the independent comics. And I have found them deserving of my help.

So this is what I will do. I will dedicate one whole column to the independent publishers. And not just *any* column! No way! This will be a GIANT-SIZE DOUBLE SIDNEY MELLON COLUMN! That's right! *Twice* as much Mellon as you usually get, for no extra charge!

And in this giant column I shall not attack them, but shall rather make suggestions on how they might do better. Should they hearken to my advice, soon they shall find themselves not only producing art and story worthy of the name "graphic literature," but, verily, winning the loyalty of hundreds of thousands of more readers. With my guidance, their professionalism soon shall rival that of even Marvel and the New DC!

Everyone who studies the graphic field knows that the first problem that all the independents have to solve is that all the companies lack a unified look and approach. Not only are the art styles so different from each other that they rob the companies of any uniform look, but none of them even have a consistent universe or very many cross-overs.

They could cure a lot of the problem by having a "Crisis on Infinite Earths," just like that masterpiece from the New DC, to unify their universes and kill off all the deadwood. But the universe has to be more than just consistent. It has to be big enough to contain true epic drama. Therefore I would recommend that all universes include underwater races, lost worlds, intergalactic civilizations, occult planes, and other dimensions. Every universe should also have gods that get involved in the affairs of Midgard (that means Earth).

(If you want to see how this is done, I will send you my *Compendium of the Savagarian Universe* which will be published along with my graphic novel trilogy, *Thunderskull!*)

And listen, independents! Make sure you publish a *Who's Who* or an *Official Handbook* so that your loyal readers can use the info for role-playing games. This is important. Take *Maus*. Even though I don't like *Maus*, I think that it would make a great role-playing game. But the publishers don't provide enough info on the number of mice, the number of cats, the various weapons that the cats have, or whether Vladek knows any martial arts.

The independent publishers should also quit being so cheap and hire real pros, like Jim Shooter, Marv Wolfman, George Perez, and, if it's humanly possible to get him, the master of us all, Harlan Ellison. And, if by some miracle you can get Frank Miller to work for you, let him completely rework any title he wants. I'll bet he could even make *Steve Canyon* good.

But don't let creators own their own concepts. Control should be in the hands of wise, seasoned editors with a big picture of the entire company in mind. Like at Marvel.

So much for generalizations. But each independent publisher has a lot of specific problems that need my specific help to correct them. Let me start by offering my advice to the companies that obviously need me most. Take Kitchen Sink.

After going with nothing but *The Spirit* for almost three years, this young company has finally expanded with a few other titles. But it is from *The Spirit* that the company must build. First, they should get new creators on it. It is too old-fashioned as is. The Spirit could be the next Batman, in my opinion, and thus he would make a good leader for a team. I would hire Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams to give him the mood he really needs.

That gives us the problem of the Spirit's sidekick, Ebony. A less thoughtful columnist might suggest just eliminating this inappropriately humorous character. But the major companies know that you should never let supporting characters get away. Dare to bring them back as super-villains! This could bring great pathos to a drama. Imagine the Spirit's anguish as his best friend turns out to be evil. And readers would talk for years about the Spirit's epic battle with *Dark Ebony!*

I would cancel *Death Rattle*. Kitchen Sink should learn from the professionals... after all, DC was smart enough to cancel *House of Mystery* and *House of Secrets*. A good time to get rid of it would be when the company does its "Crisis on Kitchen Sink Earths." This would be a good opportunity to get rid of all the parts of their universe that were introduced in *Death Rattle*. Except they might keep Bulto the Cosmic Slug as a villain for the Spirit—but without all the deadwood of previous history.

Now we come to *Borderworlds*. This could be a good series, except it is set in the future and therefore outside of continuity. I would have the cast of *Borderworlds* go through a time-warp to the present. They could be like the Starjammers. Cockrum would be good. The crew of *Alien Fire* would also go through a time-warp to the present. Because of their strange looks they could be hunted, like mutants. This is good basic conflict.

Most importantly, I would hire a Marvel veteran, one who knows well the true nature of heroism, to create a new super-hero team. I think Al Milgrom would be a good choice. He would know, for example, that all super-heroes must have a lot of problems. This is where realism comes from. For instance, it wouldn't be realistic for characters to save the universe all the time if they didn't have problems like elderly sick relatives or being part cyborg.

This is the team the Spirit would lead. It would also include the New Omaha. Deformed heroes like Ohama are particularly good, since this provides them with realistic problems.

But why "The New Omaha," you ask? Well, I'm not a prude, but Omaha is crude. Make her *sexy*, yes! Please! But never *crude*! For example, she could still do all the things she does, but she should do them between issues, and then she can make innuendoes about them in clever dialogue. And she should be far more heroic. And athletic, like a cat. In fact, it wouldn't take much to make her just like Tigra!

And now... a company that needs my help even more than Kitchen Sink. You guessed it. Renegade. Though run by the lovely and sensitive Miss Denny Loubert, this is a publisher that seems almost confused beyond hope.

Ah, but there is one obvious starting point for them. Give Ms. Tree super-powers! I think natural powers for her are psionic deduction powers and invulnerability. Then I would do something very daring: I would give the whole Ms. Tree detective agency super-powers and make them a team! With these changes, *Ms. Tree* would come into its own as legitimate graphic literature. As it is, you can see stuff just like it on TV.

I would keep Max Collins on the book. He really surprised me with the solid job he did on *Batman* and *Wild Dog*. He proved that he is already ready for the big leagues, so Renegade won't have to spend a lot of money to hire a known professional.

But please, Denny, *please*... get rid of Terry Beatty! His drawing is too simple to be realistic!

But wait. I'm being too harsh. I don't want to discourage Mr. Beatty from pursuing his artistic dreams. But I think he is pursuing it in the wrong direction. I think he would be very well suited to Marvel's Star Line. Little children, who have not yet learned how complex reality is, respond to that kind of simpleness. But on *Ms. Tree* I would replace him with Jack Fury, now that *Merc* has been cancelled. That book was very realistic.

Flaming Carrot is making progress, especially now that he has added a super-hero team. I would give Flaming Carrot a more realistic mask, though. The one he has now is silly. It's almost as if Bob Burden is trying to be funny. And if that is the case, then Renegade has a major problem that only a veteran editor could solve. I would hate to see humor get in the way of what could be a really good super-hero book.

I'm sure a veteran editor, though, could make Bob Burden write plots that make sense. I know Renegade won't be able to lure away real editors like Mark Gruenwald or Ann Nocenti or Danny Fingeroth, but maybe you can train somebody just as conscientious and dedicated to legitimate continuity.

Finally, I would have Denny make up with Dave Sim. I know that often in life people who care deeply for one another are often broken up by misunderstandings. If only people stopped to *talk*, to *feel*, to *love*! then Denny and Dave could get back together and Cerebus could pass through a time-warp and rejoin the Renegade Universe. And Dave could go back to his Barry Smith style.

The rest of the Renegade books must be cancelled.

Even though Mr. Gary Groth and I are not on the best of terms, I will rise above personal squabbles and extend him the hand of aid in help. I know his position as leader of the Elitists might cause him to heed not my words, but I dearly hope he has wisdom to see my suggestions will bring him the respect of the entire graphic community, and not just of his personal hanger-ons.

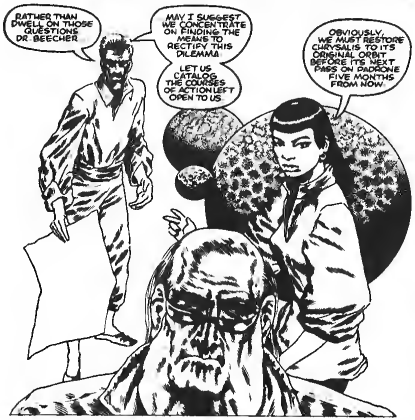
First of all, BRING BACK *DOOMSDAY SQUAD!* This is the greatest comic Fantagraphics has ever done. Now, I understand that John Byrne and Mr. Groth aren't talking these days. John has said that he won't do any work for Fantagraphics any more. I don't want to sound presumptuous, folks, but I think this is silly. Can friendship, on this mortal plane, be so frail?

John, you should know from your work with Ben Grimm and Johnny Storm that friends can make up, even after the most bitter abject tribulation, if only they have the courage.

And Mr. Groth, you should be grateful that one of the greatest myth-makers of our time would choose to honor your little company with his work. Don't let sour grapes prevent you from receiving the generosity of one of the truly good people.

Now, I understand that even if John and Mr. Groth make up, John will be too busy finally making Superman respectable to be able to spend much time on *Doomsday Squad*. But if he can just plot and pencil, the Fanta-

Maybe when Don Simpson does *Borderworlds* again, he'll send 'em through a time warp.



graphics bullpen could step in. I think Gilbert Hernandez would be a natural to script and his brother Jamie to ink.

Speaking of the Hernandezes, I think *Love and Rockets* should be turned into a dinosaur book. Jamie draws realistic dinosaurs. The dinosaurs could be mutated humans, and feared and misunderstood by real humans. Since Gilbert will be busy scripting *Doomsday Squad*, a new writer will be needed. My suggestion? Jack Kirby! That would make Groth happy, and anyway, I hear he did a good job on *Devil Dinosaur*.

The whole Fantagraphics Universe could then be in Doomsday Squad's future, a post-holocaust future with dinosaurs added. This Universe would also have a historical past. The fathers of all the heroes, for example, should have fought colorfully in World War II.

Another Fantagraphics staffer who could stick around is Peter Bagge. He writes some things that seem true to life. The Bradley family, in fact, reminds me of my own family life. But *true-to-life* isn't to say *realistic*. Bagge needs the right vehicle to write drama of true contemporary importance. I would let him create and write his own super-hero team. It could be about youngsters who fight the kind of scum who thrive in post-holocaust worlds. This could be very realistic, like Mad Max movies.

But Peter Bagge should not be allowed to draw, ever! If *Neat Stuff* is his idea of what people look like, he obviously never went to art class. I would get somebody to draw his comic who obviously did, like Jackson Guice.

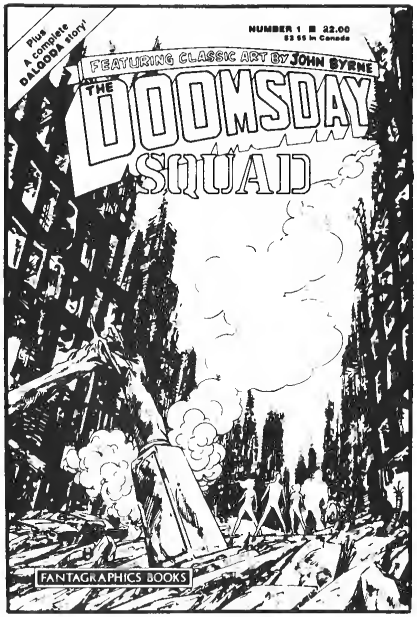
Fantagraphics should also cancel *Popeye* and *Prince Valiant* and *Little Orphan Annie* so they could afford to go to an all-color line.

I know there is daring in what I suggest here today—especially in suggesting it in the very pages of a magazine published by Mr. Gary Groth! Even though this has yet to see print, I can already hear him yelling, "That Sidney Mellon's ideas are anti-Elitist! He must be silenced!" And, indeed, if these sentences do not appear in print, you'll know that I have been censored.

But I hasten to say, "Be not so quick, Mr. Gary Groth! There is *wisdom* here if you would but see it!"

So I toss you this gauntlet: I, Sidney Mellon, herewith, in front of all my readers, challenge you to a debate! Yes, a *debate*! A debate, not only on my specific suggestions, but on the very purpose and future of independent graphic literature!

My coworkers will be watching the editorials of *The Comics Journal* to see if you respond. I'm sure they will let me know if you do.



Gary Groth's greatest coup and Fantagraphics only money-maker: *Doomsday Squad*

Well, now you can see how Kitchen Sink, Renegade, and Fantagraphics could improve themselves until they wouldn't be embarrassed to be seen on the same newsstand with Marvel and the New DC. Now we leave behind the black-and-white publishers for a moment and move on to those that are already half-way to respectability, if only because they publish in full, vibrant color.

First let's take a look at Eclipse, under the editorship of the gracious Miss Cat Yronwood. Now, a lot of people have complained because I put down *Zot*. But I don't think *Zot* is a total loss. Many things are good about Zot, such as his costume and powers. But many other things need to be changed, and fast!

First of all, I would destroy Zot's universe so that he would have to stay on Earth. The destruction of his universe would make him bitter, and he could overcome the problem with silly humor he has now. He could even turn into a hot-head. Zot would make an excellent hot-head on a super-hero team. But sensitive readers would know that he was secretly guilty about not preventing the cataclysmic destruction of his universe. This is good. As 27 years of Marvel history have proven, every great hero must be tortured by guilt about something. Otherwise, a lot of things about Zot could stay the same. Scott McCloud could even stay on, as inker.

Airboy is good, but he's too locked into his own story. He has to cross over more, maybe join a team, which is the true test of every great hero, except Spider-Man (it's okay for Spider-Man not to join a team, but that's because Spider-man is unique. If Eclipse didn't let Airboy join a team, people would think they were trying to imitate Spider-Man).

One excellent cross-over for Airboy would be a fight with Zot. They could fight because of a misunderstanding, and afterwards, when they make up, we could see their warm, loving sides. All of Earth's super-powered gladiators should have warm, loving sides. Read Chris Claremont to learn how to do this.

All of Eclipse's Japanese comics will have to be cancelled. After World War II, which the Japanese lost, who would want them to be part of the Eclipse Universe? And if you're going to unify your universe, you have to go all the way. To publish something outside your universe only makes your loyal fans feel cheated. (Although it's okay for Marvel and the New DC to occasionally publish things that aren't part of their universe, because they've earned the right with decades of quality product).

Eclipse should bring Crossfire back but only if they let him wear his costume more and bring back Rainbow! Her and Crossfire could be as good a couple as the Vision and the Scarlet Witch. In fact, a daring development would be if they would join the Eclipse team for a while and then quit and go off on their own.

Bring back *New Wave*! It was Eclipse's best comic. Its cancellation shows that Eclipse isn't quite ready to reach a professional level. Being a heroic super-group, it was unquestionably their best-selling book, and still they cancelled it!

I hope they don't do that with *Liberty Project*. *Liberty Project* would be the foundation for the New Eclipse. It already has an excellent action-artist. But one thing baffled me. Didn't they understand super-hero tradition enough to introduce a new member in Issue 4? Everyone should know by now that all super-teams should add a new member in their fourth issue.

Scout should go through a time-warp and the rest of the line should be cancelled.

First Comics are so close to being professional that they might even get there without my help. They're already in color and every issue has plenty of blistering action. All they really need is a good *Crisis on First Earths*. Then, once the Crisis has unified the First Universe, they should rework the basic concept of all their long-running comics and renumber them with Issue One. This is standard industry practice today.

For example, have Jon Sable retire, put a new hero in the Jon Sable costume, and bring back Sable in a new costume, with a new name. Every company should change the costumes of its heroes from time to time—dare to innovate!

American Flagg should develop super-powers and have less sex.

The only First book I would cancel is *Nexus*, for two reasons. One, even though the *Nexus* cast could go through a time-warp and make a great Starjammers-type team in the present, this would be a rip-off because I've already suggested that Kitchen sink do the same thing.

Two, you've probably all noticed how much more professional Mike Baron's writing has been getting lately. Cancelling *Nexus* would free him up to pursue the career he so richly deserves at Marvel and the New DC.

Also, that would free Steve Rude up. I think he would be a good choice to draw *Crisis on First Earths*, if he were inked by a true industry professional, like Tom Palmer or M. Hands (whatever happened to him anyway? He was one of Marvel's most versatile inkers).

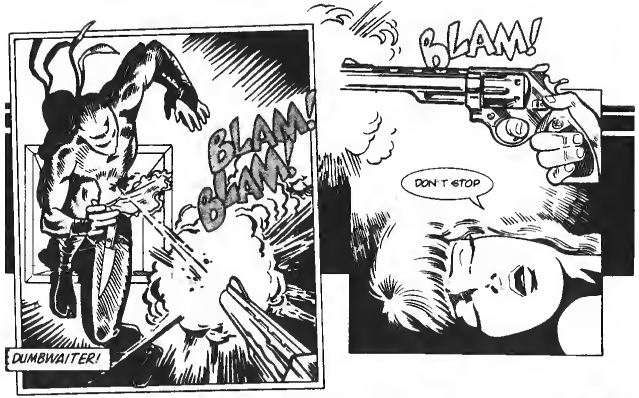
Now that the First Universe is unified, and hopefully in the hands of wise, seasoned editors, many cross-overs will be scheduled. This is very important. What better way to explore the heroes' powers, like who's stronger, American Flagg or Elric of Melnibone?

New heroes should be added to flesh out the First Universe, and a good way to do this would be to give the heroes sidekicks. I wouldn't overdo this, and I'd make sure that all the sidekicks had realistic problems like drug addiction or weak hearts.

Now, wait! I hear what you're yelling: *"Sidekicks!* Eww, that Sidney Mellon likes *kid stuff!"* But you know better than that. I am perfectly aware that in the old days sidekicks used to be juvenile and goofy, and they had stupid names like "Aqualad" and "Kid Flash." But now that graphic literature has matured, First should be very careful to give their sidekicks realistic names. They're on the right track with "Lone Wolf and Cub." To them would be added "American Flagg and Banner," "Grimjack and Gremlin," and "Jon Sable and Mink."

There are many other companies that need help, but even Sidney

Think of the possibilities! Destroy Zot's universe, put him in a team, make him the hot-head, and keep Scott McCloud as the inker.



How can you take Ninjas seriously if they're wearing aprons? From the sure-to-be-a-classic-to-somebody-maybe *Trouble with Girls* #1

Mellon doesn't have time to extend a generous hand to them all. But there is one company I would like to discuss because it is very new and it has a lot of potential to be professional if it will make one big change right away. This is Eternity.

Except for their inexplicable decision to publish in black and white, Eternity has a very respectable line. From the pulse-pounding horror of *Dark Wolf* to the dramatic team dynamics of *Ex-Mutants* to the graphic originality of *Libby Ellis* to the gritty realism of *Stealth Force*, these are concepts worthy of Marvel itself. (If only they were unified!). But, tragically, there is one book in the Eternity line that threatens, by mere association alone, to drag the rest of the line down to the bitter dregs of defeat.

I refer, of course, to *The Trouble with Girls*.

There is much professional material in *The Trouble with Girls*: Ninjas, realistic beautiful women, and page after page of punishing action. But over every single page, obscuring every great moment, parrying every fine thrust with a low blow, towers one horrible stain: *Silliness!*

For example, just as we are gearing up for a senses-shattering battle between Lester Girls and a coven of rogue ninjas, what should we see? The ninjas are wearing little frilly aprons! This is not just an affront to the fine concept of Lester Girls. This is not just an affront to all of us who paid our hard-earned shekels to read this book. This is an affront to all graphic literature *worldwide*! This book walks right up to graphic literature and laughs open-mouthed right smack in its *face*!

Why? For the answer, you don't have to go any further than the credits. Because this book is co-written by *Amazing Heroes* reviewer Gerald Jones.

I was pretty easy on Gerald Jones back when I critiqued my fellow critics in *ComicsWeek*, but that was before he showed his true colors. If you read his last few reviews you'll know what I mean. Cases in point: He is always talking about weird food and writers nobody would read and all these foreign countries he's supposed to go to. He's constantly bandying about foreign words to show what a good vocabulary he has.

And he's always bragging about how he knows *girls*! He tells us how he's married and he goes out to dinner with some girl in L.A. and he lies to these girls on the bus and he's always acting like he knows Heidi McDonald. So *what* if he knows girls? Why does he have to keep hitting us over the head with it? Does he think I care? Why is he so pretentious? Why can't he just analyze books honestly, like me, instead of showing off all the junk he knows? Why is he trying to show me up?

But worst of all, Mr. Gerald Jones is obviously in love with his own humor. He can never just jump right into a column. He always has to bore us with a bunch of stupid in-jokes that nobody gets anyway. What a tragedy that just because Gerald Jones's brother R.A. writes Eternity's best book, *Dark Wolf*, they let Gerald horn in on *The Trouble With Girls*! Because he has completely ruined it with his berserker silliness.

This is very sad and I'll tell you why. The one I really feel sad for is Mr. Gerald Jones's co-writer, Bill Jacobs. Bill, tragically, is obviously a real talent. How else do you explain all the excellent things that creep into *The Trouble With Girls*? Bill obviously has a master's grasp of ninja-lore, sophisticated weaponry, international politics, and feminine psychology. Bill is obviously cool and confident where the fair sex is concerned. You never saw him write a whole column just to prove that he knows Heidi McDonald!

If you read carefully it is obvious that Bill wants to give Lester Girls super-powers. How humiliating it must be to have the Elitist Mr. Gerald Jones prevent him from bringing his creation into the great graphic tradition!

Bill Jacobs is obviously ready for a career in the pros. I vote that he should be allowed to take over both *Daredevil* and *Kamui*, so he could create ninjas the way they should be, ninjas that would make Frank Miller proud. I would predict Bill Jacobs to be the next super-star of graphic literature, if he can get away from that mocker of the medium, Mr. Gerald Jones.

The only sad part would be that if Bill went to Marvel, that would leave the dangerous Gerald Jones (who could *never* sell a story to Marvel in a million years) to write *The Trouble With Girls* alone. Can you imagine what that fiend would do to it? It might turn into another *National Lampoon*!

Wake up, Eternity! Wake up, all you independents! How can I help you if you won't help yourselves?

You have the raw material to bring about a true revolution in literature. Imagine, independents! Imagine the *glory* that is in your power! Imagine bringing about a world that would contain so many Marvel-like comics! ●

Don Rosa's INFORMATION CENTER

Questions or corrections to: Don Rosa, 10504-B Easum Rd., Louisville, KY 40299

DAVID BACHMAN—Oklahoma City, OK

When DC got rid of Kryptonite in 1971, one side effect was that a new weakness had to be developed for Supergirl. In *Adventure* #402 she was given a drug which caused her to have "on-again, off-again" powers. Was a cure ever found for this drug or was the whole idea merely forgotten after a while?

This is the sort of query which takes me about an hour to come up with an answer I'm not sure of. You forced me to scan through many issues of *Adventure* which were written, drawn and edited by one of my least favorite funny-book craftsmen: Mike Sekowsky.

In one tale he had a character fly to "The Phantom Zone planet where villains of many worlds were kept"... so much for being familiar with the feature he was editing.

Anyhow, I see Supergirl having these on-again, off-again powers as you mention, once Joe Orlando became editor, the situation was mentioned less and less. Yet still seemed to be around when Supergirl ended in *Adventure* in #424. From there she jumped over to the first issue of her own title, and scanning the first several issues of that title, I see no mention of her little problem. Therefore, I assume that the idea was simply allowed to be forgotten as was Denny O'Neil's "new version" of Superman of that same period. Remember some dopey ideas that some writers thrust into the "Superman legend" which were later allowed to be forgotten? Clark Kent's glasses which hypnotized people into thinking Clark was puny-looking? How about the story where Superboy found Jor-El and Lara *still alive* in a rocket in suspended animation? Maybe it doesn't matter anymore since we're supposed to forget about Superboy and Supergirl! Or at least until John Byrne decides they exist. *[Which, as we know, has already happened, but as we also know, Mr. Byrne no longer has the say-KD]*

TIM WALTERS—Muskogee, OK

Could you tell me who any of the writers and artists were on Dell's *Ghost Stories* (After the first issue)? Also *The Outer Limits?*

You seem to be aware that *Ghost Stories* #1 (Sept. '62), which stood apart from the subsequent issues, was written by John Stanley, the writer and penciller on Dell's *Little Lulu* comics for eons.

The stories in that first issue are definitely about the creepiest ('G' Rated) funny book tales of the post E.C. period... I still recall the summer day I bought my issue in a drug store on the way to the swimming-pool. I'm glad you're not asking for the artists on that issue since I don't know who they were, except the final story drawn by Gerald McCann.

As for the remainder of the series, that's pretty simple—#2-5 were completely drawn (except the painted covers) by McCann. Then #6-20 were completely drawn (with possible occasional assists?) by Frank Springer. After that the title simply went into reprints for #21-37 *except* for when somebody at Dell got a wild hair somewhere and had all *new* work in #35 by Jack Sparling (who I suspect was helping Springer on some of those other issues).

The artists on all 18 issues of *The Outer Limits* is a similar matter—here's the entire list:

Jack Sparling.

As for the writers, that's a bit harder to guess on Dell Comics.

GREGORY VITOULIS—Elizaville, NY

Could you please give me a list of all the appearances of Marvel's "Zombie?"

Assuming you're familiar with this character, you're probably aware that his *first* appearance was in July 1953 in *Menace* #5. Marvel brought the character back from the dead (but zombies used to that) exactly 20 years later in their black and white *Tales of the Zombie* magazine where he appeared in issues #1-10, plus one annual. This was a fairly interesting idea—in *Tales of the Zombie* #1, the issue is lead off by a new "prequel" to the 1953 "Zombie" tale which is reprinted as the issue's second story. The reprint, originally drawn by Bill Everett, had numerous text and art changes, including redrawing the story's imperiled female to change her from a 50's pin-up girlie to an early 70's flower child. Another change was to give the Zombie a longer, hipper hair style. (There are few things worse than an unfashionable Zombie).

I glanced through Marvel's other horror titles of that period (*Vampire Tales*, *Monsters Unleashed*, *Dracula Lives*) and I don't see any other appearances by Mr. Zombie. Now, I'm gonna take a chance and not bother to check the regular comic books for something like an issue of *Marvel Team-Up* with "Spider-Man and the Zombie," inasmuch as one of the things the "Comics Code Authority" banned in 1954 was the use of zombies in standard code comic books. The obvious reason this was done was due to the public's growing fear that young and impressionable children would adopt the zombie's unfashionable hair styles.

MARC CRISAFULLI—Gaithersburg, MD

Are Matt Groening's cartoon shorts done especially for Fox's "Tracey Ullman" TV show, or were they previously made?

These are *new* cartoons done for the show by a company which I believe is called Klasky-Cuspo, which may not be spelled right even *before* these typists get at it. Jim Engel (who answered this for me) visited their offices in Los Angeles, and says they are in the same building which once housed Bob Clampett's studio where "Beany & Cecil" was produced. Readers are free to infer their own ideas of the significance of the fact.

Can you give me the address where I can contact veteran animator Chuck Jones? Did he ever do a syndicated strip?

Jones did a "Peanuts"-type newspaper strip in the mid-70s which Mr Engel believes was called "Crawford." As for contacting the guy, the address is: Chuck Jones Enterprises, 789 W 20th Street, Costa Mesa, CA 92627. Jones's offices are *not* located in the same building which once housed Bob Clampett's studio.

Can you name Tex Avery's shorts during his stint at MGM?

More than likely, Bermuda. Actually, you're getting a bit far afield from comic books, but since Avery just *might* have done some cartoons about teenage mutants, I'll go ahead and give it a try. These will be all the cartoons directed by Tex Avery while at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer from 1942-1955. There are a few recurring characters noted as follows: Droopy (D), Screwy Squirrel (SS), Spike (S), George & Junior (GJ).

1942: The Blitz Wolf, The Early Bird Dood It.

1943: Red Hot Riding Hood, Who Killed Who?, Dumb-Hounded (D), One Ham's Family, What's Buzzin' Buzzard.

1944: Screwball Squirrel (SS), Batty Baseball, Big Heel-Watha (SS), Happy-Go-Nutty (SS).

1945: The Shooting of Dan McGoo (D), The Screwy Truant (SS), Jerky Turkey, Wild & Woolfy (D), Swing Shift Cinderella.

1946: The Hick Chick, Lonesome Lenny (SS), Northwest Hounded Police (D), Henpecked Hoboes (GJ).

1947: Hound Hunters (GJ), Red Hot Rangers (GH), Uncle Tom's Cabana, King-Size Canary, Slap-Happy Lion.

1948: Little Tinker, Half Pint Pygmy (GJ), What Price Fleadom, Lucky Ducky, The Cat That Hated People.

1950: Senor Droopy (D), Bad Luck Blackie, Doggone Tired, The House of Tomorrow, Wags to Riches (D,S), Little Rural Riding Hood, Counterfeit Cat (St), Outfoxed (D).

1951: Ventriloquist Cat (S), The Cuckoo Clock, The Chump Champ (D,S), Garden Gopher (S), The Peachy Cobbler.

1952: One Cab's Family, The Magical Maestro, Rock-A-Bye Bear (S).

1953: TV of Tomorrow, Little Johnny Jet, The Three Little Pups (D).

1954: Droopalong Droopy (D), Homesteader Droopy (D), Billy Boy, The Flea Circus, Dixieland Droopy (D), The Farm of Tomorrow.

1955: Field & Stream, Deputy Droopy (D), The First Bad Man, Cellbound, Millionare Droopy (D). ●

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COMICS in review

by Andy Mangels

Comics In Review Criteria: The comic books reviewed herein will be critiqued as subjectively as possible and on their own merits—whether they succeed as a comic book, that is, a combination of words and art to tell a good story—and never by critiquing the creators involved.

The grading method relates to what condition a collector would want to keep the comics reviewed, i.e. "If a reviewed comic is graded 'Pristine Mint,' it is among the better comics, and should be well cared for, if graded 'Coverless,' it probably isn't worth buying, no less keeping.

Back again. I'm here to renew my attack on the delicate sensibilities of the comic reading audience! Get ready for another no-holds-barred review column.

My mailman is beginning to resent me, I think. He keeps delivering packages and envelopes from all over the country, and lately, from England as well.

On the other hand, I think he's impressed to be delivering to a world-reknowned author (Ha Ha Ha, I laugh maniacally). So he doesn't complain too much.

Well, on to the reviews. We've got some doozies this time.

***Legend Lore* #1, "Before the Storm"; Ralph Griffith and Stuart Kerr, writers; Guy Davis, pencils; Dirk Johnston, inks; Arrow Comics; $1.75.**

Boy, the last time I reviewed some of Arrow Comics' output, I scalded one of their books (which was subsequently cancelled), so I was kind of surprised to hear from Arrow again. Publisher Ralph Griffith was a good sport, and has sent me a few upcoming projects, one of which is the two-part *Legend Lore* mini-series.

For regular readers of *The Realm*, this book details some of the background and history of the "Realm-world." It is presented by the same creative team.

I read *The Realm* for a few issues, but quit after becoming kind of bored with it. I sense in *Legend Lore* the same problems I found in *The Realm*. This is not one of those books that sets my hair afire.

Legend Lore is within the realm of what I term "Tolkienesque fantasy," and as such carries much of the baggage associated with that type of story.

Like every dutiful comic/science fiction/fantasy fan, I read *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* before attempting the monstrous *Silmarillion*. I was lost by about the tenth page, as the genealogies of about ten different characters with names like No'zep'cker or Hobskotch were explained in great, laborious detail. I put the book down, and never looked back. I've not read Tolkien since. So sue me.

The opening few pages of *Legend Lore* introduce us to all of the lands of Azoth, as well as several principal characters, all with names like Drohm, Brachmon, Alieandor Goldtree, etc. I was (again) so lost by page 15 that I almost quit reading, but perseverance and respect for a creative effort won out, I continued. By the end of the story, I had a general idea of who most of the lead characters were (though I couldn't tell any of the dwarves apart), and what their relationships to each other were.

The Realm was inspired by role-playing games, which were inspired by Tolkien's fantasy (that's the way I understand it), and now we have have *Legend Lore* inspired by *The Realm*. Somehow it all seems awfully incestuous, though not any more so than most super-hero comics, I suppose. Still, I felt that too many different characters and names were thrown around in the script, with very little support given for either. Just about the time I had a handle on who what character was, the scene changed, and more similar looking characters were introduced!

As to the art, Guy Davis has a fairly pleasing art style (though the way he draws hair gags me), and is a nice enough style for this type of story. He has a major problem, however, with drawing characters to look different from each other. It's that old can't-tell-the-Avengers-apart-except-for-their-costumes syndrome rearing its ugly head again, leading Davis astray. Most of the dwarves are completely inter-

changeable, differing from each other only with the voluminous amount of facial hair each one wears.

Another problem Davis exhibits is lack of forethought on his panels. In the dwarves castle for instance, all of the doors and furniture are standard height, as if made for normal-sized inhabitants. If Davis had thought this out, he could have added some humorous and interesting incidentals when the full-sized elf comes calling. He could duck through doors, squirm on a seat that was too small, or hit his head on the ceiling. None of this had to be a story element, yet it could have added something in the background.

Davis's storytelling can be confusing at times as well, and the sameness to the characters really works against him during battle scenes.

Legend Lore is not a bad book. It is entertainingly written, competently drawn. It is, however, too highly reminiscent of Tolkien and many of his successors and imitators. As a two-part series, it also has a finish, so this war will not drag on (although I suspect that the outcome of the war is obvious to *Realm* readers).

I think that it could possibly have been stretched into three issues to provide a much fuller background for the characters and situations. Instead, I felt as if I had been dropped into a foreign war, with no one who spoke my language to interpret the situation for me (minor point here; the language goes back and forth between archaic (wheretofores) and modern usage. Let's make up our minds. And "daemon" and "faerie"? Come on, guys.)

Legend Lore is not my type of book, but it might be yours if you indulge in this type of fantasy.

Grade: Fine

***Deadface* #5, "Business as Usual"; Written and drawn by Eddie Campbell; Ink assists by Ed Hillyer; Harrier Comics; $1.95**

Now here's a type of fantasy story that I do like to indulge in: mythology.

I have to admit that I never gave *Deadface* a chance when it came into my store, and never looked at most Harrier Comics. Nothing personal, just didn't care for most of the artwork, and thus, never gave the stories much of a chance.

Then, I got a package from England. "What's this," I asked, "Fan mail from some overseas flounder?" No, from Harrier Comics with all sorts of review copies, and a nice letter from their publisher (actually the letter got here the next day... it's a long story). In the package were copies of *Deadface #3-5*, which have all been published in England, but I don't recall seeing them here in the States. Regardless, not knowing when they were getting here to the States, I read all three, and am reviewing the latest one.

Deadface is the modern day story of the few remaining Greek Gods, and their adventures (and misadventures) on Earth. Right at the moment I'm typing this, a song came on my tape called "At the Gym" by Man 2 Man, and the first verse perfectly sets the tone for the story. "Do you want to be a Greek God, or at least just look like one? Do you want to be a Goddess, or at least just feel like one?" Strange that this song came on just now. Must be fate or something.

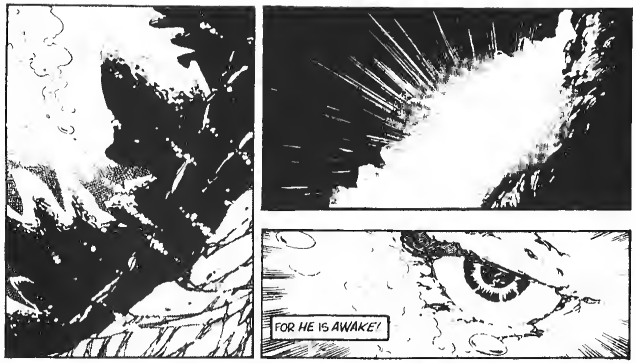
Anyhow, Deadface is the nickname of Bacchus, the God of Revelry, and the greatest storyteller of the last 4,000 years. Bacchus looks like death warmed over (*I* don't want to look like a Greek God if this is what they look like!), and has lost most of his powers. Even a god ages, as he reveals, and the "deadface" disease sets in. Eventually the gods die. One of the few surviving demi-gods from the Greek myths is Theseus (Joe Theseus, as a matter of fact), who has discovered the secret of remaining forever young. He has also set himself up as the head of a Mafia-like organization, and is currently being hunted by both the police and Bacchus; both want him dead, for different reasons.

Theseus's partner is the Eyeball Kid, a bizarre apparition with nineteen eyes (one of his original twenty was shot out by Artemis), who is responsible for the slaughter of almost the entire Greek Pantheon. The Kid wants the secret to eternal youth, and has joined in a wary cooperation with Theseus to get it.

Campbell retells portions of many different myths this issue, tying them into the current plot with remarkable ease, moving his story along speedily. His familiarity with Greek myths seems complete. Yet, by adding new twists onto these (very) old stories, Campbell has succeeded in making the Greek Gods more interesting as dead characters with a few surviving remnants, than as omnipresent gods (unlike the new *Wonder Woman*, which also uses the Greek gods to a surprising effect). He does much more than just recite *Bullfinch's Mythology* here though—he builds on it.

And a fascinating construction it is.

The terrible Godzilla is back—instilling fear and enlarging moulhs wherever he goes.



The King of Monsters, Godzilla, is back in comics and *very* grumpy after only thirty years of much-needed hibernation.

The writing on *Deadface* is top-notch, and has been hailed by such notables as Alan Moore and Brian Bolland. The dialogue is sharp, and the story expresses just enough that the reader practically begs for more.

My only problem with the book is the art. I'm much more a fan of the "traditional" school of cartooning, and as such, do not rave over most "New Wave" European art (heck, I didn't rave over the Pander Bros. art either, and they're practically my neighbors!). The art improves some this issue as Campbell picks up a co-inker, yet, it still needs crispness at times.

Deadface is an adult comic in all senses. It could not be understood by immature people (the art would turn them off), and there are judicious amounts of nudity sprinkled over the various issues. The nudity is treated extremely off-handedly. The fact that the Ancient Greeks wander around nude is no big surprise, and much more historically accurate than any past comic depiction. Campbell also seems one of the few comic artists who feels comfortable drawing both nude women *and* nude *men* (joining Dave Gibbons, the Hernandez Bros. and Rich Corben on a very short list).

Overall, *Deadface* is an exciting and compelling read. The story is fast-moving and interesting, and the characters all superbly established. The publisher even tells me there will be an "Our Story So Far" box in the next issue! My only complaint with this title is the art, but even that's improving.

I definitely want to continue reading this title (and its companion, *Bacchus*), and hope that I can find the first two issues (hint, hint, Martin). Campbell could well be the next international star from England to hit our shores, and *Deadface* will help that star's rise.

If you like a good book, try this one out, although it is spottily distributed in America, it's worth the search.

Grade: Pristine Mint

***Godzilla* #1, "?"; Toho Company, writers; Kazheisa Iwata, artist; Dark Horse Comics; $1.75**

Ho ho! What luck. Here I preview *Godzilla* in the cover feature this issue, then I get to review it in the review column! (You did read that story, didn't you? Or did you rush breathlessly to this column for my scintillating comments? For those that didn't: This is an adaptation of the Japanese version of *Godzilla 1985*, which was substantially different from the American film.)

This is Dark Horse's first manga book, following in Eclipse and First's footsteps in bringing Japanese comics to an American audience.

In this issue *Godzilla* awakens and rises out of the water, narrowly missing a fishing boat. The next day a young reporter climbs aboard the boat only to find the entire crew has been eaten alive by giant cockroach-like parasites. He escapes with the help of the only surviving crew member. The police don't believe their story of giant dinosaurs and man-eating cockroaches. But Professor Hayashida fears the worst: after 30 years, Godzilla is back!

The story is a quick read, with minimalistic dialogue (scripted by Randy Stradley from translations). Most manga seem to rely more on allowing the artwork to convey plot and characterizations, rather than endless dialogue and verbalization. The story is tightly plotted, paced well, and survives the translation from screen to comic admirably.

The book's main appeal, however, is its art. As in *Mai, the Psychic Girl* (reviewed in *AH #137*), *Godzilla*'s art is dynamic and fantastically textured. There are so many great pages here: the exploding sea foam as Godzilla rises out of the water, the gore-covered cockroaches. I don't know how Kazheita Iwata managed these effects, but they are beautiful. Whereas many American writers can and should look to European comics to find examples of good writing, American artists should, perhaps, study much of the Japanese style and influence to better their art styles.

The only complaints I would have about the art are those I have with many Japanese-style artists' work: the figures and especially faces are often distorted. Mouths especially are usually huge ovals large enough to swallow basketballs, and I doubt I've ever seen characters who close their eyes less (except maybe Raggeddy Ann and Andy). The people in *Godzilla* are no exception to this, and one of the characters has this really spastic hairstyle that makes him look like he's undergoing some kind of radiation treatment (Okumura, in case you can't figure it out).

Anyhow, *Godzilla* is a good, solid book, with (usually) well-above-average art. I never could stand the *Godzilla* movies, but I'll stick to the

The coolest of couth in *Wild Knights* #1.

comic for a little while and see how it turns out at least. This book makes Marvel's *Godzilla* look putrid in only one issue, and even shames Dark Horse's own *Godzilla Special*.

Oh, and there's a great cover by Mark Nelson, too.

Grade: Mint

***Justice Machine* #16, "Three To Make Ready"; Doug Murray, writer; Mike Gustovich, artist; Comico; $1.50**

I never did understand the appeal of the *Justice Machine*, much less the continued appeal after its numerous revampings. Hmm. Maybe that's it. I'll get back to that thought in a moment, but first, the story of the issue.

As the book opens, Demon (whom many thought died about six issues ago—and who should have) is attacking Titan, in what is revealed to be a video-taped encounted being critiqued by Diviner. Titan is asleep (standing up no less!), and dreaming of his past in a sequence that made no sense at all to me. The meeting is dismissed with the revelation that Demon is still loose somewhere in the Machine's headquarters, and that they'll all sleep with guards to their rooms.

Later, Titan wakes up the mute Youthquake and launches into his origin story. Talisman comes to relieve Youthquake (and the reader of the rest of Titan's origin), only to be revealed as a "duplicate" pages later. He isn't the only "duplicate" as it seems "someone is trying to duplicate the Justice Machine!"

It really didn't strike me what it was about this book that made it so unappealing, besides some of the obvious points.

Justice Machine is Doug Murray's only non-war comic scripting, and if this is what his original stuff reads like, I'd rather he stick to adapting real events. The plot (that term used very loosely) is poor, and the characters move through it sluggishly. No help is given to the reader to discern what's going on in the story. For instance, one main character is not called by name until the end of the book! Since Comico never runs "Our Story So Far" pieces, the reader is left floundering in what is supposedly a five-part story!

Murray's scripting is poor, with very stiff dialogue, and almost no character motivation. Titan finds out that two other Machine members are "duplicates," so what does he do? Does he check what kind of duplicates? Are they in rubber masks? Are they surgically altered? Are they robots? Aliens? Who knows!? Titan doesn't check, nor does his teammates.

The shoddy script is not helped by Gustovich's completely uninspired art. Gustovich is one of those professionals that has always been almost there, but never quite good enough. His work greatly resembles the early John Byrne of his *Space: 1999* days, although even that comparison is giving it more than its due. Anatomical grotesqueries abound (such as pages 7 and 17). There is not a single attractive-looking person in the whole book either. Gustovich has no knowledge of sign language—something he needs when drawing a mute character. His mute man communicates with hopeful puppy-dog-like facial expressions, rather than using any kind of signs. His hands are doing something; we just don't understand what.

I said earlier I didn't understand why this book was popular, especially after numerous revampings. What do you get if you take any number of standard Marvel or DC writers, put them with a roughly professional Byrne clone, and put them on a super-hero team book with a rotating cast? You get the *Avengers*, that's what! Or any number of Marvel/DC team books over the years.

Over its six years, twenty-some issue run, *Justice Machine* has had at least five (seven, I think) different writers, and another handful of different directions. Each new writer that came onto this book decided to ignore what the other writers had done, and establish a "new direction." Murray even brought back a man from the dead, ruining one of the few good *Justice Machine* stories ever done (and writer Tony Isabella's best). The concept behind *Justice Machine* seems to be that behind most every Marvel and many DC books being produced over the last 15 years. "It doesn't matter who does it, if the characters are there, it'll sell."

Justice Machine is then, the closest thing to a mainstream comic published by an independent company. It has absolutely no single creative vision (other than regular artist/creator Mike Gustovich's) and the recent addition of Murray as writer does not help in the slightest. *Amazing Heroes* scribe (and a good friend) Mike Eury has just been named editor of *Justice Machine*, and I hope he can salvage what is by far the worst of Comico's fairly good line. Here's hoping for you, Mike. They haven't given you much to work with.

If you liked the *Defenders* (circa 1977) from Marvel, *Justice Machine* is your cup of tea. It's certainly not mine.

Grade: Poor

***Wild Knights* #1, "A World of Care"; Evan Dorkin, writer; Alex Leonine, penciller; Myke, inker; Eternity Comics; $1.95**

You've got to give Eternity credit. They advertise and promote their books like no other independent company I know of. Every other day it seems I get a review copy of some Eternity title, or printed copies of the published works. Thanks guys. Keep up the good work.

On to something that isn't quite "good work," I have the third of the seemingly endless *Ex-Mutants* spin-off series resting squarely on my computer table. Eternity has renumbered most of the series, and subtitled them "The Scattered Earth Chronicles" to let us know that they all tie in together. They've all supposedly taken a new direction as well, with new writers and artists (does this sound familiar?). Doesn't help much though.

The Wild Knights is a group of Mutant Biker/Truckers who roam the nuclear-ravaged U.S. countryside trying to survive, and maybe help out any other survivors they meet... if the price is right. That makes them Mercenary Mutant Biker/Truckers, right?

This group is led by Zachary Adamson, a man who seems fairly normal except that he's only got three fingers. The rest of the group look like refugees from the London punk movement with leather, spikes, mohawks, silly make-up, and trenchcoats. Oh, and most of them don't have eyeballs—just blank sockets.

Wild Knights is not poorly written, given what Evan Dorkin has to work with. He does have a captivating style when writing dialogue for the religiously fanatical group Red Kross and its leader, Mercy, but most of the rest of the dialogue is just there: it doesn't excite you, yet it doesn't bore you either.

However, only about three people in the book are given any kind of character play. A careful trimming of the cast might remedy this situation, as the cast is seemingly too large for a semi-inexperienced writer like Dorkin to manage effectively. The book is paced okay, but there are just too many people, few of which actually mean anything to the plot.

Dorkin is completely let down by the art in the book, which could give coloring books a good name. Truthfully, that is about the level the *Wild Knights* artists seem to aspire: a gross, ugly coloring book. Figures are static and malformed (maybe because they're mutants?), and facial expressions are just plain silly. The storytelling is weak (although passable), and absolutely no play is given to panel arrangement. The artists seem to feel they must stick to Jim Shooter's edict of five or six panels to a page.

If you're an *Ex-Mutants* completist, or a fan of any of the above creative team (Evan Dorkin also does *Pirate Corps*, presently in search of a publisher), *Wild Knights* just might be for you. I found it poorly drawn and on the verge of being competently written. The best part of the issue is the cover, and even that's kind of ugly.

I really think the only audience for this book will be the Ugly Punker Mercenary Mutant Biker/Trucker Comic Fans.

Grade: Poor

***Sinister Romance* #1, "The Isis Syndrome"; Glenn Dakin, writer and artist; "You Put a Spell on Me"; Trevs Phoenix, writer and artist; "Compulsion"; Warren Pleece, writer and artist; Harrier/New Wave Comics; $1.95**

Sinister Romance is an eclectic anthology title which takes old style romance stories, and skews them off into the Twilight Zone.

The first story of the issue (also the cover story) is "The Isis Syndrome." In it, "the only super-hero on campus," Radio Boy, finds he never quite fits in with any social set, even though he is popular. A new Egyptian student named Clara arrives the same time Ancient Egyptian Princess Serpesta's sarcophagus tours the area. Radio Boy falls in love with Clara, but she starts changing from her meek and mild mannerisms, to daring, flashy Egyptian dress and demeanor.

Love makes the real magic as *Bewitched* meets Al Capone in *Sinister Romance* #1.

This is also the funniest story of the issue. Imagine *Bewitched* meets Al Capone and you've got the gist of the story. Everything about the story works wonderfully, and the ending, although predictable, caps it all off. Trevs Phoenix is another British talent to watch in the future.

The final story is "Compulsion," and it is an Alex Toth homage. A middle-aged magician uses his powers to make a woman fall in love with him. He finds that the Mystic Rectangular Order does not approve and he must flee with his new bride.

Artist Warren Pleece (?) does not have the control over his forms as Alex Toth does, yet throughout most of the story, his work seems more aetheticallly pleasing than some of Toth's.

This story does have a glitch in that part of it is a dream sequence, but we're never quite sure just how much of it was or wasn't a dream. Even on several repeated readings I couldn't figure it out.

Publisher Martin Lock tells me that this issue may contain a fourth eight page story, but at the time he sent me this it was not decided on.

This is a one-shot title, and if sales permit, will be a continuing series. It is irreverent and funny. Unlike Eclipse's *Seduction of the Innocent*, these are all new stories, and told from a very '80s perspective.

If you like *Flaming Carrot* and Renegade's romance books, you'll probably like *Sinister Romance*. And you'll probably find it the same place you found *Deadface*.

Grade: Very Fine

***It's Science With Dr. Radium* #7, "The Scientist"; Scott Saavedra, writer and artist; "Planet of Suckers"; Bosco, writer and artist; Slave Labor Graphics; $1.75**

This is apparently the last comic book format issue of *It's Science*, and I think that's sad. Because... well, it's great!

I've followed *It's Science* since the very beginning, as well as most of Slave Labor's campy line-up, and have rarely been disappointed.

This issue is a slight dip down in its enjoyment quota, but it's still high above most comedy comics. There is a parody of *The Fly*, and we also check up on Doc's female visitor from the past, who's been stored for the last

three weeks in the freezer. Needless to say, she's none too happy.

Saavedra has always had a wonderfully wonky cartoon style. His work at times resembles that of Bill Watterson of *Calvin and Hobbes* fame, although not enough to say that either one influenced the other.

It's Science's cast is fantastically eclectic, from the flying toaster, Rez, to the good doctor himself, who seems to have more than a few gears loose, if you know what I mean.

However, Saavedra has this sometimes annoying quality of using *It's Science* as a repository for all of his scrap pieces of Zip-A-Tone. Hardly a single panel goes by without a square or two of tone floating in the background. This looks alternatively high fashion or very '50s, depending on what else is in the panel.

The back-up story (there's always one) is a Basil Wolverton homage, that could just as easily have been by Basil Wolverton. It neither attempts to parody or build on Wolverton's art, nor does it necessarily detract from it. The story about a ship landing on a planet full of brainsuckers and a robot could have easily been reprinted from an old Marvel monster book.

This issue of *It's Science* is a little less manic and quirky than previous issues, and the back-up is almost disappointing in its non-lunacy.

The good news is that the new format for *It's Science* will be a 48-page magazine format, which will appear twice a year. Hopefully by then Saavedra will have time to do full length stories crammed with the amazing amount of kinetic energy and in-jokes he has had (mostly) in the first seven issues. *It's Science* is funny and campy, but not for everyone. It is now in the realm of *Mazing Man* and *Ralph Snart*, both of which were exceptional comic series, but both of which are now on the every-now-and-then publishing schedule.

We'll see you Dr. Radium . . . in the future!

Grade: Near Mint

***Blackmask* #1, "The Story Begins"; Franz Henkel and Jong-Jin Lee, writers; Jong-Jin Lee, artist; Eastern Comics; $1.75**

Blackmask is the third comic series from Eastern Comics, and is quite different from all other manga books currently on the market; it's new material, done specifically for an American audience. Franz Henkel co-plots and scripts the story in America, while it is drawn, lettered, and printed in Korea.

As to what *Blackmask* is, that's a harder question to answer. It's part detective story, part revenge story, part adventure story, and part pro wrestling story.

Blackmask is a little part of a lot of different stories, and a fairly entertaining story as a whole. The writing is a little bizarre at times, and Jason comes off as a jerk in the book though, and even though you want to sympathize with him. He yells his way throughout almost the whole issue.

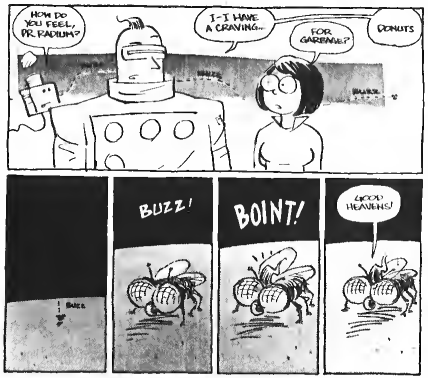
The art by Lee is very individual, and I found myself alternately being intrigued by it and hating it. At times his work resembles Ernie Colon, while keeping his own style. As the cover shows, though, his work looks ultimately suited for color. There are just too many lines and wrinkles and shadows, with very little texturing done anywhere. Almost the entire book is a stark black and white, with few tones, and (again) a very coloring-book feel to it. This is a very intricate coloring book, but that's what the art resembles most.

My biggest problem with the book was probably the lettering. You just don't realize how good some letterers can be until you've seen a bad one. The words are all nicely lettered and legible, but the word balloons are either crammed or much too spacious. The only words ever emphasized are the proper names like "Jason" or "Mafia." Another problem is that the characters overlap the balloons at times, separating words and phrases with the artwork, which can make for some confusing reading, a factor that isn't helped by misspellings. Henkel tells me in an accompanying letter that the lettering was done in Korea and that they are trying to get the books lettered in the U.S. I hope so, because this current lettering is atrocious.

Blackmask is more enjoyable than *Forbidden Kingdom* (reviewed in *AH* #137) and *Demon Warrior*, Eastern's other two books, but as I've said before, the ninja/martial arts/Ancient China stories are not my type. I wouldn't have thought *Blackmask* to be my type either, but the story is interesting enough for me to keep a wary eye on it. If the lettering problems are solved, and if the artist makes his style a little cleaner and more legible, *Blackmask* could do quite well.

Grade: Fine

Gene splicing is a hazardous scientific hobby in *It's Science With Dr. Radium* #7.



***Liberty Project* #8, "Rebel Rebel"; Kurt Busiek, writer; James Fry, penciller; Doug Hazlewood, inker; Eclipse Comics; $1.75**

We go from a first issue to a last issue now, as this is kind of the last issue of *Liberty Project*. Kind of? Tell you about that in a moment.

The Liberty Project, if you didn't know, is a government sponsored program which rehabilitates super-criminals by forcing them to be super-heroes.

In this issue, the team must search for the beserk John Savage, a criminal who had once been a member of the team. Savage never quite fit in, and taunted by the team members, broke out of the base/prison last issue.

The Project members quickly find themselves re-incarcerated, losing all of the privileges they had so justly earned in the previous issues. The public is at their throats, some of their superiors want them eliminated, and they still have the problem of John Savage to confront. When the latter does occur, the bloody climax results in "The Liberty Project [being] cancelled."

This is probably the best issue of the *Liberty Project* yet, a book which has remained one of the best independent super-hero series on the market. Busiek's writing has made this a very enjoyable title, taking subtle jibes at some of the traditional super-hero cliches. He puts more of an emphasis on the characters than on their super-heroics. He paces his script well, and generally turns in a better-than-average job. This is the same guy that wrote *Red Tornado* and *The Legend of Wonder Woman*? I don't believe it.

Busiek is well supported by his art team, James Fry and Doug Hazlewood, both of whom failed to impress me very much with their early work on this series. They've grown, bringing a certain cartoony-but-realistic style to the book. The storytelling could still use some work, especially the fight scenes. Perhaps the worst thing about the series was the costumes of the lead characters, which looked kind of silly, even for super-hero costumes.

We won't have to put up with the costumes in the future though, as due to changes made in the upcoming *Total Eclipse*, the Liberty Project will reappear, *sans* costumes (no, not nude —in street clothes), in a new book entitled *Double Danger*, this fall.

Regardless, this issue of *Liberty Project* is well worth picking up, as are the back issues. It's got kind of a contemporary smart-ass feel to it that's fun and interesting at the same time. Not top-of-the-line stuff, mind you, and it certainly won't win any awards, but it is a good way to spend your $1.75. It's entertaining without too many pretensions, and that's just fine.

Looking forward to your next project, *Liberty Project*.

Grade: Mint

***Barbarienne* #5, "The Slayers"; Martin Lock, writer; John Marshall, pencils; Nick Neocleous, inks; Harrier Comics; $1.95**

This is the last of the Harrier books I'm reviewing in this column, although there are several more upcoming ones waiting for a future column. That Martin Lock is great at promotions for his company. I just wish he were a more dynamic writer.

Lock scripts *Barbarienne*, a title which I always thought was drawn very crudely, and thus never read by me. This issue there's a new artist, and he makes the book look much more attractive. As to the story . . .

Memree (why do I hear the *Cats* soundtrack every time I say that name?) is used as bait for a slaver. Charol (apparently Memree's lover?) tracks the slaver's hideout.

Charol ultimately faces the slaver, who is a female, in battle. She wins (kinda guessed that, huh?). All's well that ends well.

I kept trying to maintain some interest in the story, but found many elements barring me from doing that. First, I despise barbarian comics. Second, I dislike Good Girl comics (material that only appears to titillate the prepubescent reader). Third, the story was just plain boring, trite, and uninspired.

Lock has a good ear for dialogue, but the majority of the dialogue is modern language, even to the point of slang and idioms, i.e. "Putting on a little weight?" Or how about "My man'd pay to have me back, I know." Yeesh!

The art this issue is not bad, although some of the poses did seem a little stiff and unwieldy. Marshall shows talent, but it is wasted on endless pages of women with big breasts tied up in different positions, women with big breasts in provocative clothing, women with big breasts being manhandled, women with big breasts *ad nauseum*. I felt like I was reading *The Best of Wertham's Censored Headlight Books*! There's even a Dave Stevens tribute/swipe cover on this issue, with Memree's buns glaring cheekily out at the reader.

I was thoroughly unimpressed with most of *Barbarienne*, but it was obviously not aimed for my target audience. As to what target audience it is aimed at, I won't even hazard a guess.

Maybe I'm being too harsh. Lock says that he didn't think this was a very good story (why did he do it then?), and that the next trilogy of stories is much better.

I hope so, but I still very much doubt that *Barbarienne* will be my cup of T & A. Sorry, Martin.

Grade: Good

End Notes

That's about it for this issue. I'll return in #142 with more reviews to whet your comic reading appetite. Y'all show up now, hear?

Special thanks go out this time to Jeff Lang at Comico, Ralph Griffith at Arrow, Martin Lock at Harrier, Randy Stradley at Dark Horse, Tom Mason at Eternity, Dan Vado at Slave Labor, Franz Henkel at Eastern, and Fred Burke at Eclipse. Without them, I wouldn't have had anything to review, so they deserve their due thanks.

Send material for Andy Mangels to review at 2167 S.W. Yamhill, Apt. #6, Portland, OR 97205. This is a round-robin column. Please feel free to send other review material directly to this magazine. Thank you. -Eds

Project members are at the end of their ropes and at arm's length from John Savage in their final issue, *Liberty Project* #8.

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ADVENTURES OF CAPT. JACK

Adventures of Captain Jack #3: Part 2 of "Sat. Night": Hermen and Beezlebub visit the netherworld.

Adventures of Captain Jack #4: Meniscal astronauts and a betty back-up strip.

Adventures of Captain Jack #5: "Farmer Fred, I'm In Love With Your Daughter" Part 1: Arrival on Janet's planet. (This is the one that drove the distributors nuts around the country.)

Adventures of Captain Jack #6: Part 2: Hermen and Janet decide to go away together.

Adventures of Captain Jack #7: Part 3: Beezlebub intrudes in Hermen and Janet's relationship.

Adventures of Captain Jack #8: A daring escape, the Captain in drag, and more.

Adventures of Captain Jack #9: Pool hustling with Saturated Fats, and the conclusion of the storyline!

CRITTERS

Critters #4: *Gnuff* and *Birthright* continue, *Lionheart* premieres, and the first Ken Macklin cover painting!

Critters #5: *Birthright* continues, the first *Gnuff* novel concludes (with a cover), plus Stan Sakai's *Nilson Groundthumper*!

Critters #6: *Usagi Yojimbo* tale with cover, *Birthright* concludes, and the first *Firecracker Jack* by Mark Armstrong!

COPYRIGHT © RESPECTIVE ARTISTS: Freddy Milton, Bob Foster, Rand Waller and Kate Worley, Steve Lafler, Stan Sakai, Mike Kazaleh, Milton Knight, Sam Kieth, Steven A. Gallacci, Ty Templeton

Critters #8: *Jack Bunny* by cover artist Mark Armstrong, Templeton Kelly tribute, and *Lionheart* begins.

Critters #9: Hallowe'en issue with Gnuff behind a mask, Lionheart's nightmare, and Dog Boy.

Critters #10: *Usagi Yojimbo* cover/story, plus *Gnuff* and *Lionheart*.

Critters #12: *Birthright* returns, plus Wallar/Worley, and Sam Kieth!

Critters #13: *Gnuff* cover, plus *Birthright* and Mark Armstrong.

Critters #14: *Usagi Yojimbo* story and cover, plus *Birthright* and *Gnuff*.

Critters #15: *Blue Beagle* and *Fission Chicken*, and *Birthright* races on!

Critters #16: *Gnuff* ends, another *Nilson Groundthumper* story by Sakai, and *Birthright*!

Critters #17: *Lionheart* returns, plus the conclusion of *Birthright*.

Critters #18: *Leggo Lamb* by Jim Engel premieres. Also, the conclusion to *Lionheart*, and *Blue Beagle*.

Critters #19: *Gnuff* returns, plus *Sam and Max*, *Freelance Police*, *Lizards*, and *Fission Chicken*.

Critters #20: *SpeakingStone* by Wallar/Worley, *Gnuff* and *Fission Chicken*.

Critters #21: More *Gnuff*, *Lizards*, *Fission Chicken*—32 pages worth—plus a Sam Kieth cover!

Critters #22: *Watchmen* cover parody for *Blue Beagle* story, plus *Gnuff*, *Fission Chicken*, and *Ambrose*.

Critters #23: Christmas issue with *Gnuff*, *Lizards*, *Fission Chicken*, *Lionheart*, as well as strips by Marc Schirmaister, Sam Kieth, Tim Fuller, Mike Kazaleh, Bob Conwey, Ty Templeton and Anthony Van Bruggen—plus a flexidisc with songs performed by Templeton & Alan Moore!

Critters #24: *Gnuff* continues, plus *Lizards* and *Fission Chicken*.

Critters #25: The return of *Lionheart*, plus *Gnuff* and *Angst*.

Critters #26: *Angst* cover by Van Horn, plus *Gnuff* and *Lionheart*.

Critters Special #1—Nilson Groundthumper and Hermy: Both the *Albedo* stories, plus a new 10-page strip!

DOG BOY

Dog Boy #1: Journey off into surreal experiences with "Werewolf Bikers" and more!

Dog Boy #2: Sir Isaac Newton guest stars as reality unravels.

Dog Boy #3: Dog Boy shows how to publish your own comic book.

Dog Boy #4: Dog Boy goes to Hell, plus Dog Girl invades the White House. Guest starring Reagan!

Dog Boy #5: An experiment misfires, and Dog Boy and Benb combine to form . . . Dogb! Oh no!

Dog Boy #6: "Drinkin' Man's Blues," with a striking painted cover.

Dog Boy #7: Jazzy issue exploring Dog Boy's multiple personalities!

Dog Boy #8: Alfred Knoot starts a new newspaper, Dog Girl goes graffiti-crazy, and more!

Dog Boy #9: Dancing with the cats, Dog Girl in jail, Benb goes crazy!

HUGO

Hugo #1: Milton (*Midnite*) Knight's feline "Meets the Baron."

Hugo #2: Hugo becomes a cartoonist and gets into deep trouble.

Hugo #3: Hugo is abducted by mermaids and fights sharks.

MYRON MOOSE

Myron Moose Funnies #1: Lots of goofy snot jokes, plus parodies of Dr. Seuss and Uncle Wriggly books.

Myron Moose Funnies #2: Parodies Batman, Mickey Mouse, Spirit, more.

Myron Moose Funniee #3: "Comic Book Fans," and more silly snot.

USAGI YOJIMBO

Usagi Yojimbo #1 (2nd printing): Usagi journeys talls how he became a samurai. Plus: Dennis Fujitake!

Usagi Yojimbo #2: Usagi goes into training and has his first duel.

Usagi Yojimbo #3: The continuation of "Samurai," and a "Croakers" strip by Don Dougharty.

Usagi Yojimbo #4: The conclusion to Usagi's origin, and the first half of a penguin strip by Gary Kato.

Usagi Yojimbo #5: A one-issue tale of silk, treachery, and greed, and the end of the penguin tale by Kato.

Usagi Yojimbo #6: Usagi vs. a water elemental, plus two more Usagi tales!

Usagi Yojimbo #7: Usagi makes a friend, plus Phil Yeh!

Usagi Yojimbo #8: A difficult assignment, plus Tom Luth.

BOOKS, MAGAZINES, AND OTHER STUFF

Usagi Yojimbo Book One: Every *Usagi Yojimbo* story before *Usagi #1* collected in one handy 160-page volume, with a new Stan Sakai cover.

Amazing Heroes #9: Behind the scenes of DC's *Captain Carrot* comic with Scott Shaw! and Roy Thomas. Plus a funny-animal pictorial.

Amazing Heroes #42: Funny-animal issue with Joshua Quagmire cover and interview. Plus: Arn Saba on Neil the Horse and Dave Sim on Cerebus!

Amazing Heroes #111: Ty Templeton (of *Critters*) interviewed. It's funny.

Amazing Heroes #129: Interviews with Steven A. Gallacci and Fraddy Milton, "Why I Draw Funny Animals" by various, the new *Mighty Mouse* show, plus more!

The Comics Journal #73: Carl Barks featured, with long retrospective.

The Comics Journal #82-83: Mammoth interview with Dave (*Cerebus the Aardvark*) Sim.

The Comics Journal #99: Big interview with Arn (*Neil the Horse*) Saba.

Anything Goes! #3: Featuring a full-color Captain Jack story by Mike Kazaleh, Cerebus vignette by Dave Sim, and Cerebus cover by Neal Adams.

Anything Goes! #6: Cover painting by Stan Sakai of Usagi Yojimbo, worth the cover price.

NEMO #21: 28 pages of Jack Kent's classic *King Aroo* strip—a treat for classic funny-animal lovers!

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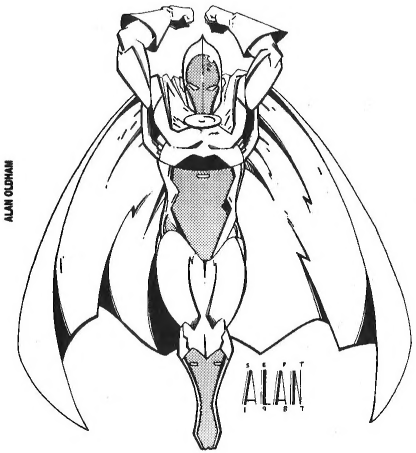


PETER GARCIA
Hatillo, Puerto Rico

What Was That Again...?

How about X of a Kind stories on Mass Amnesia stories in which mankind lose memory. Green Lantern, Dr. Strange and others use their powers to erase some facts from teh human race the same goes for Odin (twice), Eternity, Ancient One, Beyonder, Space Phantom and the Crisis which make *most* people forget about Supergirl and the Multiverse.

Stories using Presidents of the USA like Kennedy in a superman story in the early 1960s, Reagan in *Rom, Suicide Squad, Legends*, etc.

Heroes who use too much snappy patter in battle with a villain to drive him mad and confused: Spider-Man, Hawkeye, Mockingbird, etc. While the Creeper uses his maniacal laugh to make people go crazy.

Heroes under the effect of alcohol making the error of going into battle with a super-villain: Iron Man, Capt. Britain, Omega the Unknown, Wolverine, Spider-Man, etc.

On the facts of DC cities where they are set in the second team-up book of Superman/Spider-Man. Metropolis is hundreds of miles away from New York. Peter Parker took the N.Y.-Metropolis Express Bus in that same story Spider-Man wonders why he *never* met Wonder Woman in N.Y. (when she was living there for a time). New York is a big town. The heroes don't live that close together. Captain America used to live in Brooklyn Heights. The Wasp in Cressfield, NJ, Avengers Mansion is near Central Park, etc. And the heroes don't spend every second of their time battling super-villains or going after normal crooks all the time. The heroes need to spend some time at their civilian jobs: Peter Parker, Steve Rogers, Tony Stark, Clark Kent, etc. When the heroes in N.Y. were to the secret wars for a week every crook had a great time of their life. Daredevil and a few others left in N.Y. had to work overtime for the crime wave that went wild. A crook in a Spider-Man story was thinking of leaving N.Y. and going to the West Coast but a pal told him that the Avengers are in Los Angeles and the Midwest has the Hulk, American Eagle, members of the Rangers, in New Orleans, Captain Marvel (and sometimes Brother Voodoo). While nations like Canada have Alpha Flight, England Excalibur and Union Jack, etc., some villains left N.Y. to escape the heroes like Electro who found Daredevil in the West Coast of all places and once in *Spider-Man* #12. Or Octopus went on a crime spree all over the country but since Spider-Man did not go after him, the good Doctor returned to New York to get the Webhead instead. Besides the Watchmen, how about a list of who will cast the Fantastic Four, Nick Fury and his agents of S.H.I.E.L.D., X-Men and others by the fans?

And a history feature on Man-Wolf, on Savage, Thongor, Morbius, Power Line (with a preview of the new series), Hulk, Dominic Fortune and What If?

● *Let's take these puppies one at time: Power Line is already done, and did Dominic Fortune have much of a history?*

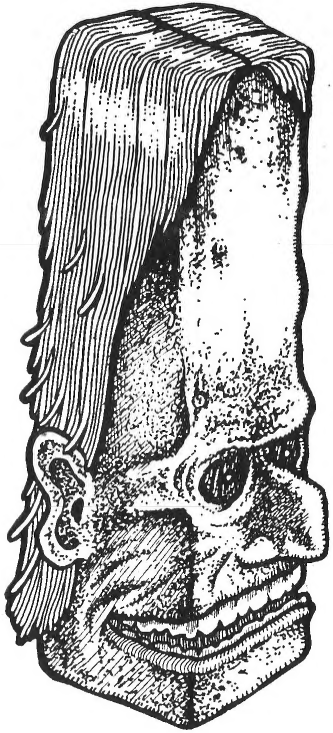
An interesting short article is heroes visiting other cities/countries.

As you know, the disease of alcoholism does a lot more than mess you up in one event, and I can't think of too many plots that had just one drunken binge. Can you imagine The Leader with a hangover headache?

Snappy patter is ridiculous when you think how fast the characters are moving. How about though balloons! People often don't think out "I've got to find a way out of this." It's feeling. But it's one of the mainstays of comics, like cartoon characters lifting in the air before they run.

I understand in upcoming issues Captain America is going to be fighting Ronald Reagan—literally!

And, you know this was coming, the amnesia article . . . we forgot. —KD



JEFF GAITHER

EVAN DORKIN
Lawrence, NY

The Mutant Dorkin

Things have been real hectic heresville so firstly, let me thank you folks for the *Heartbreak Soup* paperback, for the spot illo, and the copy of *Amazing Heroes* that a Weenie sketch appeared in.

Pirate Corp$ has been canned from Eternity. I'm in the midst of pitching the book to the rest o' the pack right now. Very distressing, let me tell ya. The Eternity run will end at #6, unless some idiot goes out and buys 4,000 copies and keeps it going. The bright note is that there is a possibility that I will put it out independently and keep it alive as a pet project besides my other work. On top of that, I just got a strip into *Centrifugal Bumble-Puppy*, so, of course, that got cancelled as well. Hell, somebody get me on *X-Men*, I'll kill that sucker in four months!

Enough of this rambling. Welcome aboard, Bruce, and best o' everything.

● *Best back to ya.* —*EDS*

DARWIN McPHERSON
Toronto, ONT

We Recognize You Anywhere

For the sake of accuracy, my compatriots at Dragon Lady Press and I feel the need to comment on *Amazing Heroes* #133—the Preview Special. Dave Darrigo supposedly made some misleading statements about our personel that need to be cleared up.

The review of DLP credited the editing of our titles to our publisher John Biernat and Dave Darrigo. In fact, they handle the company's administrative functions and *some* editorial direction. For the most part though, our editing is done by our fearless leader and art director Emil Novak with Kean Crowe and Mike Hyla.

Another fallacy was Dave's assertion "...DLP is a part-time operation with a minimum staff," and because of it, our titles are late. *Au contraire*, our regular art production staff numbers at four. Emil Novak, Mike Hyla, Tim Wrothny and myself are constantly on schedule and, in actuality, often have to wait for more work to come in.

Should circumstances necessitate it, as in the *Alley Oop* instance mentioned in the Preview, we are prepared to hire out extra help. Late titles are, more often than not, the result of the harsh realities of publishing (with distributor payment problems) and other internal complications not on the production end. Perhaps Dave just meant John and himself; most of us *are* part-time, but we're almost always ready.

It's not hard to see how the mix-up occurred. Dragon Lady Press is stationed in Toronto, Canada with John and Dave. However, the production work is done here in Buffalo. We don't always know what's going on up there and vice versa. (Frankly, I've never even met Dave and he probably has no idea who I am.)

Anyway, we just want to set the record straight. Though the staff has received an abundance of laudatory reviews about our work over the last couple of years, we've never been personally recognized for it. Dave's printed remarks and credited position, we felt, put us further in the background than we actually were.

Understandably, every detail can't make it into a mammoth project like the Preview Special. But those same credits appeared in the previous Special, so we figured it was time to say something.

We aren't perfect yet. We do have some obstacles to overcome. In the end, we can only give it our best shot. And month after month, week after week, day after day, we do.

● *Hey, nobody knows more about the trials of trying than yours truly.—KD*

NEXT ISSUE: Marvelites stand tall! Previews of *Marvel Comics Presents* AND the Light and Darkness Wars, a *Speedball* FirstLook, and a cover with Wolverine, Shang-Chi, and Man-Thing by Tom Grindberg. WOW spelled backwards!

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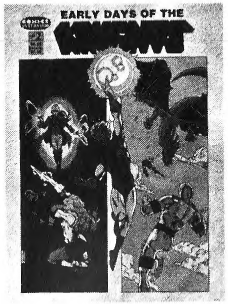

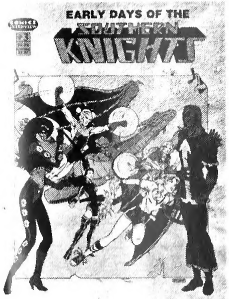

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